A DISCOURSE Concerning Vulgar Prophecies.

WHEREIN

The Vanity of receiving them as the certain Indications of any future Event is discovered;

And some

CHARACTERS

of Distinction between true and pretending Prophets are laid down.

By JOHN SPENCER, B.D.

ISAI. 44. 24, 25.

I am the Lord, that stretcheth forth the Heavens alone,---that frustrateth the tokens of the Lyars, and maketh Diviners mad.

EZEK. 13. 9.

My hand shall be upon the Prophets that see Vanity, and that divine Lies; they shall not be in the Assembly of my People.

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THE PREFACE.

THE Soul of Man was made for intimacy and converse with God, and therefore; in a tacit sense thereof, is continually reaching and aspiring after it. But Lust and Pride having blinded its Eye, it is apt to affect and seek it in fond and fantastick ways. Whereas good men are (as Antoninus *speaks)* δι' ἔργων ὁσίων συνήθεις τοῦ θεοῦ γινόμενοι, *become familiar with God by holy practices, by profound Humility, by abstractions from the world and Lust; Men have conceited it is procured and maintained by going off from Reason, by Raptures, Visions, Prophecies, Enthusiasms, hot and vigorous impressions of spirit; and have verily thought (as the ancient Heathens by their Prophets) that they are scarce ever* full of God, *till they are half beside themselves. And therefore the Lives of the* Romish *Saints are stuffed*

out with perpetual Stories of ſuch things as theſe, which do but render them to the contempt of men that have a true and ſober Notion of Religion.

In confidence of this conceit, ſuch numbers of Devoto's *in all Times have pretended Enthuſiaſm and extraordinary illapſe from Heaven, though to different ends and purpoſes, according as a different habit of mind or body and ſome mutable circumſtances of the Age or courſe of life might determine an hot Humor and buſie Fancy (for it is little elſe) to exert it ſelf.*

Among the many giddy Fancies and Errors of the late Times, bred, like the Worms in the Manna, *out of the Body of our corrupted Government and Diſcipline, this was that* πρῶτον ψεῦδος, *leading impoſture, That the true* Seculum Spiritus Sancti *was now coming on upon the World, wherein the immediate Teachings of God ſhould antiquate the more dead and obſcure Teachings of the Goſpel, as thoſe did the more weak and cloudy Inſtructions of the Law; that the Minds of Holy Men ſhould conceive (like the Virgin* Mary*) by the ſole* overſhadowings of the Holy Ghoſt, *without any Aſſiſtances from Man or Humane Literature. That Men ſhould be authorized and aſſiſted to the due performance*

of

of the Duties of publick Preaching and Praying by the incitements of God upon the place. That God was about no new Work, but his Secrets were ſtill made known unto the Faithful. *That the mighty impreſſions and propenſions upon the ſpirits of the* Faithful, *was an interpretative Voice from Heaven, a kind of* Bath-Col *to ſupply the defect of Scripture-Prophecy in Diſpenſations more dark and enigmatical. Whence it came to paſs that every morbid heat of Paſſion and blind Zeal was chriſtened by the name of an* Ignis ſacer, *the ſacred impreſs and diſcovery of the Holy Ghoſt, and every crazy Fancy and Dream dub'd a Prophetick Viſion.*

Now as Storms and Tempeſts at Sea, though they prove the Evils of many a private man, yet are the good things of Catholick Nature, becauſe ſerving as a kind of natural Exerciſe to keep that vaſt Body of Waters from putrefaction: Thus howſoever the bold Pretences to Revelations, Prophecy, and a greater intimacy with the Divine Spirit, proved the great Evils of thoſe particular Times, cauſing many (weaker veſſels eſpecially) to make ſhipwrack of Conſcience *and a* ſound Mind, *and betrayed them to groſs and ſhameful Notions in Religion and Policy; yet to the Church of God in general this hath proved*

the happy issue of this Ignis fatuus *of Enthusiasm (in all the expresses thereof) even so effectual a Discovery of it, both in its Effects,* those bogs of Sedition, Blasphemy, Profaneness, Giddiness, it leads unto, *and in its Cause,* onely a natural fervor and pregnancy of spirit in some more refined, and an heated Melancholy in other grosser Enthusiasts, *then hath been formerly made, and such as might effectually secure the Person that can do more then believe, from being easily abused by such shining Vanities as any pretended Enthusiasms make a proffer of. So that the present Undertaking to lay forth the impostures wrapt up in this most famous instance of Enthusiasm,* supposed Prophecy, *may seem to have nothing to justifie it but an honest intention: Especially considering that there are Penal Statutes provided to prevent the spreading of Seditious Prophecies, by the Severities of which those may be whipt into their wits, whom the Physick of an Argument cannot cure of their Prophetick Frenzies.*

These Considerations would easily have perswaded me to have spared the Reader and my self a further trouble, but that I saw so great an affinity between the present and precedent Subject, that the Discourses upon both would (like both the feet)

feet) derive a mutual ſtrength and aſſurance upon each other; and that the Prophecies which are the iſſues of an hot head and diſturbed imagination, are but the one half of thoſe which abuſe the Faith of the People: I conſidered withal that Prophecy *is the moſt obſtinate piece of Enthuſiaſm, having our innate Curioſity and an Experience as great as* Prodigies *to make it conſiderable. Beſides, while good Laws are the beſt Security of the Peace, ſober Principles laid in the Minds of the People are the beſt Security of the Laws.*

A DISCOURSE Of the Vanity of VULGAR PROPHECIES.

CHAP. I.

Some general accounts given of the Argument.

Counterfeits in Art, Nature and Religion. False prophecy one instance of them. What kind of false Prophets the times of the New Testament are freed from. The miscarriage of States oft by occasions contemptible, noted. The present argument suitable to the age, because an age of action, of intellectual improvement, and yet, in many, of Enthusiasm. Several confident pretenders to prophecy of late, taken notice of. The affinity between Prodigies and Prophecies in the general ends of both. Prophecies of evil consequence in States and why. Our Nation extremely inclined toward them in former times. The ancient Ethnick Statesmen how they secured themselves against the prophetick humor of the people. Judges of Prophecy in Plato, who. The Sibylline Oracles of what use among the Romans. The Opinions the ancients had of Prophecy, couched in the fable of Teresia. Religion a great sufferer by them in the Practise, Credit, Doctrine and Foundation thereof. These noted prejudicial to the mind, and why: And to common life. Two examples to evince that, taken notice of. Prophecies as universally attended to as Prodigies, amongst Heathens, Jews, Christians, with a threefold account thereof.

THE hypocrisies of *things* are as familiar as those of *men*, for as there is a great deal of *reprobate Silver* which carries the

the image of the King and looks like Sterling, so there are in *Art*, in *Nature*, in *Religion* the many instances of things that do
a Gal. 6. 12. only a εὐπροσωπῆσαι *carry a fair face*, bear a title and garb beyond their true and real value. As there is a true Masculine Rheronick wherein the *golden aples* of some rich conceptions are set in the *silver pictures* of some
b Eccles. 12. 10 b דברי חפץ *words of desire*, expressions chosen and *fitly set*, so there is a παιδανολογία, the charm of some soft and *siren* words and periods which (like a *tinkling cimbal*) make a pretty sound in the ear for a time, and rather inchant the mind then inform it. In Nature also there are the real Diamonds, and Angels of light, and others which by
c 2 Cor. 11. 14 Sophistry c μεταμορφοῦσθαι, are only *transformed into their likeness* and usurp their title. Religion also (through the Arts of evil men) is forced to carry two different faces of things under the hood of one and the same name and outward appearance: in which we find *lying wonders*, d fantastical
d Rev. 2. 24. *depths*, a *knowledg falsly so called*, a *Spirit of error*, and so *false Prophecies* disguised in the titles and images of the true.

It is indeed the great blessing promised to the times of the New Testament, that we should be delivered from all those נביאי
e Zech. 13. 2. 1 King. 18. 19. רוח שקרא (as the e *Targum* stiles them) *Prophets of the spirit of a lye*, which should call

call men to the worship of Images: and God hath fulfilled the same unto us, there being now none of those lying Prophets among us that the minds of the Heathens were abused withall, who used to erect some Idols themselves had devised, telling the people *they were the Images of such a star or constellation* שהוריעוהו בנבואתו *which was made known to them by Prophesy*. Yet there are still left among us (that there may be an exercise of Christian prudence as well as of other Virtues) some *Prophets of a ly*, which call men to a reverence of the images of their own busy Fancy, some who [illegible] (as [illegible] of the Enthusiasts of his Age) call the idle phantasms of their dreams, prophetick visions.

f *Maimonid. de Idolat. c. 1. sect. 3.*

g *Theodor. l. 4. c. 10.*

Our present business therefore is, to rub off the gilt of these shining vanities *Supposed Prophecies*, and to discover the folly of that faith and affection with which they are so generally entertained; and in order thereunto to lay down some characters of distinction between real and pretending Prophets, and to inquire (as we can) whether *the* [b] *Sun be quite gone down over the Prophets*, and the minds of men never visited now with any beams of Prophetick light, so familiar in the former Ages of the World.

b Mic. 3. 6.

The

The Argument, I know, is as fruitful a field of impoſture as the foregoing, and the perſons to whom I oppoſe my ſelf therein, are men of a more exerciſed faith then underſtanding, and there is nothing more reverenced by ſome, and exploded by others then *Prophecying*; and therefore I eaſily foreſee that I ſhall (like the candle) *prælucendo perire*, ſuffer greatly my ſelf in the prepoſſeſt thoughts of the moſt, while attempting to give light to others in ſo impoſterous and litigious an Argument as this is. But when bodies Politick have been often choked (like *Adrian*) with gnats, ruined by ſome occaſions they deſpiſed and thought moſt beneath their caution, (Prophecies and Enthuſiaſms among the reſt) and becauſe if all men of more improved intellectuals ſhould value themſelves ſo far, as never to ſtoop to a notice of thoſe contemptible errors which the people are abuſed withall, no body would be informed, (as no bodies ſores cured if all ſhould be nice:) I have the intentions and hopes of a publick ſervice to ballance the prejudices of ſome ſeverer perſons.

But that which more effectually reconciled me to this attempt, was a regard to the ſpecial ſutableneſs thereof to the preſent Age: and the great Affinity between this and the foregoing Argument.

The

The Age wherein our lot is fallen, is an Age of Action and Expectation, and in such times, prophecies generally take confidence to become publick, being then most grateful to men, usually very impatient of uncertainties where they are hugely concerned. Among the Jews we find Prophets and Oracles especially consulted in times of some publick distraction, and [i] *Polybius* tells us that when the Armies of the *Romans* and *Carthaginians* were ready every day to joyn battel, *every bodies mouth was full of Oracles and Prophecies.* Men upon such occasions are apt to believe as they affect, and then to presage as they believe. Besides, 'tis a time of improvement in all humane and divine knowledg, and that happy day seems risen upon us to which God hath promised an [k] increase of Knowledg: Nature begins now to be studied more then *Aristotle*, and men are resolved upon a Philosophy that bottoms not upon phancy but experience, a Philosophy that they can prove and use, not that which commenceth in faith and concludes in talk. And considerate men are too much themselves now to be brought (like bees) to hive under any odd form of Opinion and party of men, by the confused noise and dinn of *Carnal reason, the Spirit of God, Superstition, Reformation, and the coming in of Popery.* Now while *Wisdom*

[i] Πάντα δ' ἦν τὰ περὶ αὐτὸν λόγια καὶ πάντα χρησμολογούμενα. *Polib. Hist. lib. 3.*

[k] Dan. 12. 4.

seems

seems thus to have *hewn out her seven pillars* and her house is going up so fast, it is a duty to assist her work by removing all the rubbish of *Prodigies, Vulgar Prophecies*, and what ever Doctrine makes the minds of men soft and easy (by teaching men to believe without evidence) and so, unfit to make a due judgment of things. More-over, 'Tis a time wherein (as 'tis usual) *Folly is* as busy as *Wisdom*. Never greater talk of *terrible Signs, Revelations, new-lights, Prophecies and Visions* in out own and other Kingdoms then now. We have had [1] Volumes of Prophecies and Visions lately tendred to the World, and that by men of no common name, and with a confidence, I think, beyond the examples of History. For as many amongst our selves, disbelieve the *Writing of God* though sealed with so many mighty signs, martyrdoms, accomplished predictions, a resurrection from the dead, and the attestation of millions of wise and good men; so they protest their visions in the face of the Sun, without any considerable signs, and notwithstanding the contempt of all sober Christians, and those contrary events whereby *God* hath *frustrated the tokens of* these *lyars* and *made* these *Diviners mad*. And some of them stick not to tell the World, that *by how much the nearer that Great day of the Lord is, the more*

[1] *Lue in tenebris. edit. 1659. Histor. Revel. edit. per J. A. C. 1659. Revel. Divin. Epitom. Edit. 1663.*

more evidently and familiarly doth he expose his Prophets; such that they understand the frequent possessions, Witchcrafts, and fanatical Enthusiasms of the Quakers, [k] Satanicas esse præstigias, quibus opera Dei obfuscare nituntur, ut olim Jannes & Jambres Mosi restitere, *to be the delusions of the Devil, whereby they endeavour to obscure the works of God, as* Jannes *and* Jambres *withstood* Moses *of old.*

[k] *Histor. Rev.* p. 189.

As for that Affinity noted between this Argument and the fore-going, it will appear in the correspondence observable between Prodigies and Prodigies in the *General Nature, evil Consequents, and common acceptance* of them both.

1. *In their General Nature.* For as Prodigies are received (as the reason of the name intimates) as a kind of *Real prophecies,* (predictions, *as in a figure,* of some great plague or change in State.) So Prophecies as a kind of *Verbal Prodigies,* wonderful indications of the fortunes of Kingdoms or private persons: both feed the curiosities of men by the pretended notices of the future; and have alwaies gone undivided in the Opinions and regards of easie men, both among Heathens and Christians. Having therefore imbittered, and dryed up that one breast, *the Opinion of Prodigies,* which used to suckle this childish humor of curiosity in men:

[l] *Quia ostendunt, portendunt, monstrant, prædicunt,* ostenta, portenta, monstra, prodigia, *dicuntur.* Tull. de Divin. l. 1.

men: I ſhall endeavour to do as much to that other of *common Prophecies*, that ſo the minds of men may be forced to take to ſome more ſubſtantial nouriſhment and may come the more entire and undiſturbed to ſober and wiſe thoughts.

2. *In their evil conſequents.* Theſe Vulgar Prophecies having as malign an influence upon the *State*, *Religion*, the *Underſtanding*, and *Common life* as Prodigies.

1. *They are of very evil conſequence in the State.* The monuments of our own and forrein Nations aſſure us that there is not a more fruitful womb of ſeditions and confuſions in States then the Opinion of ſuch predictions is. *He that ſhall read our Hiſtories* (ſaith our great [1] Lawyer) *ſhall find what lamentable and fatal events have fallen out upon vain prophecies, carried out of the inventions of wicked men; pretended to be ancient, but newly framed to deceive true men: and withall, how credulous and inclinable to them our Countrey-men in former times have been.* The reaſon why the publication of any ſuch evil prophecies (as he tells us) hath been made felony without clergy by ſome ancient Statutes in our Kingdom; and ſtill interdicted under ſevere penalties both in our own and * forrein Countries. What attempt will not take confi-

[1] *Sir* Ed. Cooks *Inſtit.* p. 3. c. 55.

* *See* Lord Howard *Defenſat. againſt Prophecies.* c. 20.

dence

dence from a perſwaſion that God will ſucceed it, and that it is the accompliſhment of ſome divine prediction? and beſides, how certainly will the beſt cauſe fall to the ground, where *the hands* which are to ſupport it, are *weakned* by an Opinion of ſome unpromiſing Omen or Prophecy?

The Ancient Ethnick Stateſ-men ſeem very ſenſible what a ready weapon of Sedition this ſacred Opinion of Prophecies in the people was, and therefore being unable to wreſt it from them, they endeavoured as much as they could to blunt its edg; *by ſubtil maxims*, ſuch as theſe, [m] ἰδιώτου γὰρ πένητος οὐκ εἶδον ἐνύπνιον δημόσιον, *Perſons very ſimple or very poor, never ſaw any dreams in which the publick was concerned.* And that *none but a King or a General was* Μάντις τῆς πόλεως preferred by the Gods *the Prophet of a City*: Or *by appointing ſome prudent dent Over-ſeers and interpreters of Prophecies.* Their Doctrine (as we learn from [n] *Plato*) was τῷ μεμάνθαι, ἐπὶ τῷ ἐν τούτῳ μόνον τὸν οὐκ ἔργον τὰ φρονήματα ἢ φωνὴν δέντα ἐφ' ἑαυτῷ κρίνειν, ἀλλ' ὅλῳ, &c. *It is not for the perſon acted by a prophetick fury, whether he continue in it ſtill or no, of himſelf to judg his Prophetick Viſions or Speeches: for (as it is commonly and truly ſaid) to ſpeak and do things becoming, belongs ſoly to a wiſe perſon.* Ὅθεν δὴ καὶ τὸ πρὸ τοῦ προφητικὸν μόνον

[m] *Artemid. Oneirocrit. l. 1. c. 2.*

[n] *Plat. in Tim.*

ὅτι τοῖς ἐνθέοις μαντείαις, κρεῖττον ὄντας διακριτικὰν νόμος, ὃς Μάντεις ἐπονομάζουσί τινες. *Wherefore the law provides that an order of Prophets be ſet Judges over all Enthuſiaſtick Divinations, which Prophets ſome* by miſtake *call Diviners.* Where indeed *the Order of Prophets to whom He gives the preheminence, were none elſe but wiſe and prudent Men* (as a ° late Writer, truly) but whereas he adds, *who by reaſon of the Sagacity of their Underſtandings were able to judg of thoſe things which were uttered by this dull ſpirit of Divination, which reſided only in faculties inferior to Reaſon,* I conceive he miſapprehends the end and office of theſe prudent Perſons; who were indeed *Judges*, but not to interpret but to moderate theſe prophetick furies. For if theſe Enthuſiaſms were really divine, no wiſe man *would*, and if really phrenetical, no wiſe man *could* judg them, ſo as to expound and interpret them; for can any man make any ſober judgment of the phantaſms and heats of diſtraction, or find any reaſon in that which never approached the faculty of Reaſon? Theſe Wiſe Men therefore ſeem a kind of *Ethnick Sanhedrim* to judg of pretended prophecy in an authoritative way, and to expunge or expound according as might beſt comport with the occaſions of State. And the better to blanch over their Sentences and

° Mr *Smith Diſc. of Prophecy.* p. 195.

and to make them look like Oracle, they were themſelves reported and verily thought by the people, really prophetick perſons. Anſwerable to which ſubtil men among the *Gracians*, the *Romans* had conſtantly choſen out of the City, their ſole Keepers and Interpreters of the *Sibylline* prophecies, which ſerved as a kind of Ethnick *Alcoran*, expounded alway by thoſe *Mufties* according as the circumſtances of State might require: and 'tis not unlikely that *Cæſar* had been tampering with one of them, who told the *Romans* in open Senate, as from the Oracles of *Sibylla* that p *he that they had now their King in reality, muſt have the title of King too, if they would be in a ſafe condition.*

p *Tull. de Div. l. 2. ſub fin.*

I incline to believe that this political Sophiſm in reference to Prophecy, was couched by the Poets in the fable of their Hermaphrodite-Prophet *Tereſia*, whom they feign ſtricken with blindneſs by *Juno*, but in recompenſe of that ill turn, bleſt by *Jupiter* with prophecy: and further that this q perſon had the forms of both Sexes, and was often inſtrumental to accord many differences and ſtrifes among the Gods. Wherein they ſeem to intimate that prophecy (as found among them) was given only to perſons bereft of the *uſe* of Wiſdom, as in a dream, or in the eclypſe of reaſon by a μανιῶν ἐνθουσιασμῷ.

q Φάσι [περὶ Τειρεσίε] ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναῖκα γεγονέναι αὐτὸν, καὶ διμοτέρων ἐχειν τὰς φύσεις, καὶ πολλὰς μάχας τῶν θεῶν διϊσταται, &c. *Fuſt. Mart. Quæſt. & Reſp. ad Orthod. Q. 146.*

μα (as *Plutarch* calls it) *Prophetick efflux*, (in truth, a ſubtil vapor aſcending the body of the *Pythia* from thoſe hollow caverns over which ſhe ſtood, and begetting a kind of dry drunkenneſs in her for a time, and ſo diſpoſing her to an imitation of the Ecſtacies and prophecies of an Enthuſiaſt.) Or elſe of the very *habit* of wiſdom; (and that by *Juno*, a hand of Providence) as to men diſtracted, hypochondriacks, Epileptical perſons, old women: and this by God, to compenſate their great blindneſs and † folly in all other matters. Now theſe Prophecies ſeemed to carry the form of a *Woman*, as being delivered generally by that Sex, but conſtantly by perſons extremely ignorant, credulous, talkative, and impotent both in mind and body; and *of a Man*, as being directed, expounded and over-look'd by the care and wiſdom of ſome prudent Men. And the fable ſeems further to intimate of what ſingular Uſe in State, theſe pretended prophecies proved (when ſubtilly managed) to compound differences among the *Gods*, *Men of minds or power too high to be ſet down by any Law but what pretends from God*; and to conclude all *pro* and *con* in a Nation about matters referring to the Gods and Religion. Accordingly the ancient law-givers, *Numa*, *Scipio*, *Lycurgus*, *Lyſiſtratus*, *Sertorius*, and the reſt, called their laws *Oracles*, and the ten

† Ικανὸν ἦ σημεῖον ὡς μαντικὴν ἀφεστῶσιν θεὸς ἀνθρωπίνην λόγων, ἀδρεῖς δ' ἔννους ἐφάπτεται, μαντικῆς ἔνθεν, ἂν ἢ καθ' ὕπνον πῶ τὸ φρονήσεως πεπληθεὶς δύναμιν, ἢ διὰ νόσον, ἢ τινα ἐνθουσιασμὸν παραλάξας. *Plut. in Tim.*

ten tables pretended from God as well as the two. And [s] *Tully* adviſed the ſecret cuſtody of the *Sibylline* Oracles, *Valeantque* (ſaith he) *ad deponendas potius quam ad ſuſcipiendas novas religiones*; thus ſome ſubtil men among the *Jews*, to accord the fierce diſputes between the Schoool of *Hillel* and *Schammai*, invented the ſtory of a [t] *Bath Kol* (the loweſt degree of prophecy, according to them) a voice from heaven, ſaying, *Et horum & illorum verba ſunt verba Dei viventis*. But when the laws of God will not warrant us to tell a ly for his honor, much leſs for our intereſt, it is an inſtance of the piety and policy of the State to enact ſevere laws againſt perſons of ſo proſtitute a Conſcience, as to encourage a ſedition by any pretended prophecy: that ſo the juſt reverence of Divine prophecy may be ſecured, and Faction may not uſe thoſe Arts to *diſturb*, which Honeſty dare not to *ſecure* the common peace.

[s] *lib. 2. de Divin.*

[t] *Vid. Doctor Lightfoot. Hor. Hebr. p. 156.*

2. *Vulgar Prophecies have as malign an influence upon Religion. In the practice thereof:* for in an Opinion of ſuch things, the thoughts of ſome men are wholy entertained with enquiries *where will God be next*, and their great queſtion is, *Watchman, what of the night?* what news of things as yet in the dark and out of view? the work of the day ſcarce ever aproacheth their

thoughts: the great ſign with them of a familiar acquaintance with God is, when he is continually whiſpering news in mens ears, and making them intimate to his ſecrets, and no man ſhall be thought a ſpiritual preacher by them, but he that can looſe the ſeals of the Apocalyptick viſions. In the *interim* by ſuch fond thoughts and curioſities the minds of men are made vain and trifling, their ſpirits too ſubtil and airy to fix upon a ſerious thing, and while *their eies are thus, at the ends of the Earth*, they neglect to heed their way, and become (like ſilly birds) but the fairer mark for the Fowler, by ſtanding thus at gaze. And as great a ſufferer by ſuch things, is Religion in *the Reputation thereof*; for when ſubtil men ſhall ſee us (like the ancient *Egyptians*) inſhrine every Ape, give reverence to every vain perſon and clouted rhime, which may ape the geſtures and ſtile of a prophet or prophecy, they will be ready to conclude Religion a meer Syſteme of phantaſms, inexplicable impreſſions, and a tutoring of men to a faith of contradictions or meer imaginations. And all the *Devoto's* in the world ſhall be thought a Society of eaſy men that can ſay much and prove nothing, and that (what was falſly ſaid of the *Jews* of old) give worſhip to an Aſſes head, to the idle Viſions of their own or other mens heads, as ſoft and ignorant as theirs,

theirs. Beſides, an eaſy faith of ſuch Vulgar Prophecies as of divine impreſſion, doth greatly prejudice Religion *in the Doctrine* thereof. For men will readily conclude him *a Man of God*, and that the *Word of the Lord is with him* (be his Doctrine what it will) that ſeems to tell them things to come, (the reaſon why the Seducers of greateſt name in Story have pretended Prophecy,) The Church of *Rome* proves her ſelf the Temple *of the Living God*, and Gods preſence with her, by the Voice of his Oracles heard therein. She hath (ſhe tells us) the *Spirit of Prophecy* (called the *Teſtimony of Jeſus*) to bear [u] witneſs to her Doctrine, diſcipline and worſhip: and to this purpoſe gives us in a liſt of her Prophets (but moſt of them women) and of their wonderful predictions, and challengeth us to inſtance any ſuch parallel examples. To whom we return, [w] *We are not careful to anſwer thee in this matter:* while the houſe of God with us is *built upon the foundation of the* true *Prophets and Apoſtles*, it will not need *daubing with* any ſuch *untempered mortar* as Vulgar Prophecies are, to give ſtrength or beauty thereunto. But Religion is a far greater ſufferer by ſuch Spurious Viſions, and Prophecies, *in the foundation thereof*, that *Sure Word of Prophety* upon which it bottoms. There can hardly be a more ſubtil way

[u] Vid. *Bozium Eugub. de Signis Eccleſi.* l. 6 c. 2.

[w] Dan. 3. 16.

invented to ſink the value and credit of all divine prophecies and illapſes, then the multitude of thoſe tinſil Enthuſiaſms which are in the World. Men will quickly grow coy, and loth to truſt themſelves with a Revelation, when they ſee ſo much impoſture breaking in upon the world that uſurps that name. The Ethnick world had been for many ages impoſed upon by *Enthuſiaſms*, *Dreams*, *Oracles*, *Prophecies*, *Apparitions of the Gods*, till *Socrates* (in a diſcovery of the Vanity of them) called men to an uſe of judgment, and taught them to entertain no doctrine without or againſt apparent reaſon. And the many abuſes formerly put upon them, made them not only readily entertain his doctrine, but ſo prejudiced them againſt the very air of a Revelation, that as the Jewiſh maſters were perpetually demanding of *ſigns*, ſo the Gentile Philoſophers, *Demonſtrations*, of the firſt preachers of the Goſpel, and upbraiding them that their Doctrine was * παράδοξον καὶ μὴ δυνάμενον ὅλως ἀποδειχθῆναι λόγον, *a paradoxical doctrine, and altogether impoßible to be demonſtrated.* And amongſt our ſelves, while ſome muſt have an Enthuſiaſm in all the great turns of life, and muſt be fed, like the *Patriarchs*, with Viſions and Prophecy, others (ſeeing the impoſtures wrapt up in them) hate ſuch light meat, and

* *Juſt. Martyr. in Dial. cum Tryph.* p. 207.

and begin to look upon a Revelation as a matter un-intelligible, both in the maner of conveyance, and the way of diſcovery and diſcrimination, and to think no man can anſwer the taking up of any Opinion upon the credit of a prophetick teſtimony, to his cool and adviſed thoughts. But if the more fortunate credulity and ſimplicity of the perſons to whom theſe Viſions and prophetick Raptures happen, make them impregnable by a temptation to any ſuch ſubtil Atheiſm, yet ſtill Scripture is diſparaged while the affections of men are divided between an old Prophecy and a new, and that ſickly humor in ſome men of longing after ſomewhat new in Religion, is fed, mens gadding Fancies are gratified, and Religion is expoſed to the danger of being evaporated into air and rapture.

3. *Theſe pretended Prophecies do as much uſurp upon the mind and underſtanding:* becauſe inſtructing both Deliverers and Receivers onely to a bold and forward Faith. For they that deliver them preſume it were not to believe but to diſpute, if they ſhould (like × *Gideon*) deſire *a ſign of God that it is he indeed that talketh with them:* theſe impreſſions they conceive are both writing and ſeal to themſelves, and proclaim by their own mighty force and vivacity that they are ſet on by a divine hand: the mind of man

× Judg. 6. 17.

man (ſay they) under the Divine Viſitations, is onely τὸ θεῖα πάσχειν, to attend, in an humble paſſiveneſs and ſilence, to God, while inſtructing it by the whiſpers of his Spirit. A Doctrine which is virtually an infinite impoſture, and which brings a man into מדבר התעירה (as the *Arabians* call the Wilderneſs) a *deſert of wandering*, wherein he may run for ever from one wild imagination to another; and contains as much Reaſon therein, as the conceit of that Mariner that ſhould think his Ship ran a right courſe onely becauſe driven with a fierce wind. And as much do theſe Prophecies uſurp upon the Underſtandings of thoſe to whom they are tendred; we muſt truſt our Faith with theſe things, but never offer to demand firſt the ſecurity of ſome divine Sign; we muſt believe them of divine inſpiration onely becauſe we are told they are ſo: and if we demur, as thinking the condition unreaſonable, we are bidden to have a care we be not *found to fight againſt God*, and ſo muſt become fools for fear we prove knaves. But when our Bleſſed Savior himſelf would not ſo far controul the Law of reaſonable Nature in Man, as to require him to a Faith of his Prophecies before ſufficient aſſurance given of their Divinity; we know not to value our ſelves, if we ſuffer a Faith of theſe common Prophecies to be forc'd

y *Maimonid.* Mor. Nevoc. P. 3. c. 50.

forc'd upon us, which offer nothing to assure them but solemn looks and Verily verily! The World swarms with pretended Prophecies and Revelations; we have not onely our *monthly* but our daily *Prognosticators*, and therefore the honest looks of the proposers are not sufficient grounds of trust in this business. That proposition, *Intellectus patiens recipit phantasmata*, is a truth also in Divinity; the soly passive intellect, that is impressive and easie, that doth not use it self to discourse and judg, receives Fantasms into it self, little besides the airy Visions of its own or other mens vain imaginations.

4. *These Prophecies are of very evil consequence in common life:* They give silly men to conceit they are never Gods favorites till they are half mad, and have constant intelligence from Heaven by some new Vision. They torture mens minds with infinite anxieties, and lay upon their thoughts the Evils of an Age to lament at once. They encourage them in very evil purposes, by the confidence they give them of success. They keep men from possessing themselves in peace by a secure repose on the wisdom and goodness of God. They tempt them to a neglect of those faithful and acknowledged Rules of life, *Scripture, and the Maxims of Reason*, to attend to measures fantastical and never proved,

proved. They cow mens ſpirits, and betray thoſe ſuccors which Reaſon affords and commands the uſe of. Thus the [z] Hiſtorian tells us the *Senate* of *Florence* would by no means make oppoſition to the *French* King *Charls* the *eighth*, becauſe adviſed to the contrary by the reputed Prophecies of *Savanarola*. The Examples of men which have run themſelves upon ſtrange Precipices by following theſe fooliſh fires, are infinite. I ſhall inſtance but two, to ſtop, if it were poſſible, the mouths of my two Adverſaries in this Argument, the *Papiſt* and the *Enthuſiaſt*. The firſt ſhall be the ſtrange Example of *Pope Gregory the ninth*, who was perſwaded by the pretended Viſions and Prophecies of *Catharina de Senis* to go from *Avenion* to *Rome*, againſt the Reaſons and Perſwaſions of his Cardinals and Friends; whereby he became the occaſion of that Schiſm which laſted for about forty years in that Church. [a] In an eaſie foreſight whereof, *a few hours before his death* (which hapned within half a year after his coming thither) *having the holy Euchariſt in his hands, he proteſted before them all, that they ſhould beware of either Men or Women delivering, under a ſhew of Religion, the Viſions of their own head; becauſe himſelf, being ſeduced by ſuch, had, in a neglect of the ſober counſels of his Friends, drawn himſelf and the whole Church into danger.*

[z] *Senatus plurimum ei tribuebat, & ipſius permoti concionibus, nihil ſibi contra Regem ſuſcipiendum eſſe putabant.* Comin. de Bel. Neapolit. l. 3.

[a] *Hic poſitus in extremis, habens in manibus ſacrum Chriſti corpus, proteſtatus eſt coram omnibus ut caverent ſive à viris ſive à mulieribus ſub ſpecie religionis, loquentibus viſiones ſui capitis, quia per tales, &c.* J. Gerſon. de Exam. Doctrin. conſid. 3.

danger of imminent Schism, except the mercy of Christ interposed. The other Example toucheth closer upon our present Times; that of *Comenius* (a person whose other *works praise him, so that I need say nothing*) who was so inchanted by the simplicity of maners, solemn asseverations, frequent extasies, rapturous speeches, devout language, pompous visions, unaccountable passions, some casually accomplished Predictions of those three pretending Prophets, *Christopherus Kotterus, Christina Poniatovia, Nicholaus Drabicius,* as greatly to reverence their persons, to record and at last to publish their Visions and Prophecies under the specious title of *Lux in tenebris,* to write the History of their Lives and prophetick Raptures, to attempt to reconcile the contradictions in their Predictions: and where their deformity appeared through the finest colors he could dissemble it with, He ventures to bring himself off, thus; [b] *Sapientiam Dei varie nobiscum ludere, & lusisse hac in re, hæc ostendunt, &c.* And elswhere, [c] *Non invenio quid dicendum restet, nisi aut hæc* prophetica *non esse divina, aut hypothesin Theologiæ nostræ* (de omnimoda Immutabilitate Dei, etiam nostri & temporalium respectu) *vacillare. Utrum potius suspicandum sit, quid si pronunciare ne festinemus?* and the like: which is to make God a deceiver (I speak as a man) that

[b] Histor. Drabric. p. 157.

[c] ib. p. 234.

that ſo ſilly men may ſpeak truth.

Thirdly, *Prophecies and Prodigies touch and agree in the univerſal reception of them both.* Prophecy never wanted Profeſſors or Auditors in any Age or place in the World. It was the Opinion of ſome of the *Jews*, and moſt of the *Gentile* Philoſophers of old, that the Soul came down into the Body, pregnant with [d] δύναμις μάντικὴ, *a prophetick power*, τυφλῶται ὑὸ σβὰ ϗ πρὸς ὃ ἔνπλον ἀνάμιξιν ἀυτῆς ϗ σύγχυσιν, but it is muffled and blinded becauſe of its commixture and confuſion with this lump of Earth, which perpetually ſends up ſuch a thick miſt of Fantaſms before its Eyes, that it cannot now *ſee afar off*. A Doctrine, which the deport of the Soul, while a priſoner to its own houſe, ſeems a little to encourage: for as the Buſh in the Fable, having ſuſtained a great loſs of cloth, is fancied to ſtand ever ſince by the high-way catching hold of every mans clothes, in hopes to recover its own loſt goods; ſo the Souls of men ſeem to expreſs a tacit ſenſe of a great loſs in regard of the knowledg of things future, in this embodied ſtate, in that they ſtand (as it were) *in triviis*, and haſtily catch at any pretending Prophecy and ſhadow of Divination: and indeed I have *nothing* (in this matter) more *to accuſe my own Nation* then others of, it being an argument of the blindneſs of moſt

[d] Plutarc. de Defect. Orac.

moſt Ages and Nations, that they readily ſwallow down ſuch Flies as theſe when tendred to them.

What place and repute Prophecy held among the *Gentiles* of old, thoſe words Ἐνθουσιαζαὶ, Θεόλεπτοι, ἔνθεοι, Μυσταπάκτοι, φοιβόλεπτοι, Θεομάνεις, μεμφῆ), and the like, and that vaſt rabble of *Chaldeans, Aſtrologers, Soothſayers, Necromancers, Interpreters of Dreams and Prodigies, Diviners by the Smoke, the Exta, the Incenſe on the Altar, by a Staff, the chirping of Birds*, all of familiar occurrence in their Writings, are a ſufficient aſſurance. Particularly the Eaſtern Nations were ſo mad upon Divination, that מלאו מקדם [e] *they are full of the Eaſt* ſeems uſed proverbially by the Prophet, to ſet forth that mighty paſſion with which the *Jews* were carried after Divination and the knowledg of Futurities. And with how eaſie a Faith the *Jews* uſed to meet any pretenders to Prophecy, though calling them (to the moſt open defiance of Reaſon and Religion) Idolatry, the Writings of the Old Teſtament will ſufficiently reſolve us. And Chriſtians (though theſe Vulgar Prophecies have been proved, by an infinite Experience, a dead catch, devoid of the life of truth and perſpicuity) ſtoop as greedily to them, when ever thrown before them, as if they were all Oracle. For they eaſily

[e] Iſai. 2. 6.

believe

believe no man to be ſo projectedly Atheiſtical, as to intitle God to the Viſions of his own brain: not conſidering that the ſpirit of heated Melancholy may inſpire theſe Prophets, and abuſe them with ſome vigorous impreſſions as much as they do other men.

Now it cannot but ſeem ſtrange to our firſt thoughts, that while all other Sects and impoſtures ſuited to the preſent *guſto* of the people, have had their peculiar times and places of acceptance, and the *Wheel of Fortune* (as it is called) hath gone over them all and cruſh'd them in the duſt, Enthuſiaſts and pretences to Prophecy ſhould prove an obſtinate cheat which all Ages and Nations have been thus gull'd withal; eſpecially conſidering that the hiding of Events from us is ſo great a ſecurity to the quiet of our minds, and *felicities* are always greater, and Evils (becauſe they then afflict us but once) the lighter, which do ſurprize us. This ſo ſtrange and catholick a Vanity muſt determine our Inquiries after ſome catholick and immutable Cauſes in humane Nature which may give us ſome probable account thereof. They are (I conceive) eſpecially theſe three:

1. *A catholick preſumption of the ſingular readineſs of God to communicate with Man, eſpecially if a more refined perſon,* ופורש מכלל

מפרוש דרכי העם *and ſeparate from all the ways of the people* (as the Maſters ſay a Prophet muſt be.) This perſwaſion may grow either from a kind of tacit ſenſe in the Soul that it was made for converſe with God, to refer to him, to derive light and law from him. A remembrance of which birthright of the Soul remained a while in the more ſimple and innocent years of the World, in that frequent intercourſe between God and Man, by the miſſion of Angels, vouchſafing of divine Viſions and Prophecies, immediate Oracles, and that adminiſtration of civil affairs in the *Jewiſh* Kingdom by the immediate direction of God himſelf. Or elſe (which is more explicable) it might poſſibly ariſe from a fantaſtical meaſure of goodneſs in God. Men have thought it could not ſtand with the goodneſs of God to ſuppoſe him reſerved, and to leave them in the dark in ſome very doubtful and perplexed circumſtances of life: and therefore *ſi Dii ſint, divinatio eſt* was thought by *Tully* and others a very natural conſequence. And a late Writer, to prove Prophecy not yet ceaſed, placeth this in the front of his *demonſtrations* (ſo he calls them) *the eternal duration of the Divine Goodneſs and Bounty*; which will oblige him (ſaith he) to as free a communication of this prophetick light now, as in the years of old: and therefore

concludes his Argument with a brand upon the f *inexcusable wickedneſs and raſhneſs of thoſe men who would have this Fountain of Divine Grace dried up*, while denying Prophecy. But who art thou, *O vain man*, that wilt thus *mete out the Heavens with thy ſpan?* prefer thy ſhort thoughts of what is fit and good the meaſures of infinite Bounty and Goodneſs? Doth not the *Papiſt* conclude an infallible ſpirit in the Church, from the ſame topick the Enthuſiaſt doth a prophetical ſpirit therein, even becauſe God's goodneſs will not permit him to withhold ſo great a Bleſſing? Certainly if God's goodneſs prove the ſpirit of Prophecy to be at all in the Church, it will prove it alſo as plentifully poured out now, as in the primitive Times, God being as rich in goodneſs now as then.

f *Inexcuſabilis orgò eſt hominum illorũ malitia & temeritas, qui hunc divinæ gratiæ fontem exſiccatum hodie volunt: non minus peccãdo quam malevoli* Philiſthæi, Gen. 26. 18, *&c.* Author. lib. cui tit. *Probat. Viſ.* apud Comen. in Hiſt. Revel. p. 204.

2. *Opinions of this World vaſt and unmeaſured, is another great ſupport of the credit of Vulgar Prophecies.* Men in all times have been apt to value the concerns of this World amiſs, to think perſons and affairs hold the ſame place in the thoughts of God as of a man, and could not imagine that what was a great reality to their inchanted minds, was but πολλὴ φλυαρία, a great Fancy in the account of Heaven: and therefore eaſily conceived that all Events of greater note came with obſervation, and had

had the harbinger of a Prodigy or Prophecy to run before and give notice when ever they are coming after. This Vulgar Judgment of things drew forth that ſpeech from the g *Roman* Hiſtorian, Καί μοι πολλάκις ἐπῆλθε διανοουμένῳ, &c. *It hath often occurred to my thoughts as a Wonder, that when the City of* Byzantium *hath riſen ſo exceedingly, that no City beſides can vie fortunes or greatneſs with it,* παρ' οὐδὲν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς νόμισμα, *no Prophecy was ever given our Anceſtors from the Gods of its ſingular felicities and increaſe. And my thoughts* (as he goes on) *oft running upon this ſtrange inſtance,* πολλὰς μὲν βίβλους ἰσορεύσας καὶ χρησμῶν συναγωγὰς ἀνελίξας, *having turned over many Volumes of Hiſtory and Collections of Oracles, ſcarce at laſt have I light upon an Oracle of* Sibylla Erythrea *which ſeems to carry ſome prophetick ayrs of the ſucceeding grandeur of this City.* But yet after a full recital of the Oracle, he concludes (as he had reaſon, ſo looſe and general the words are) *If the Oracle ſhall ſeem to any one to ſpeak a different ſenſe, let him take to it if he pleaſe.* Εἰ δέ τῳ καὶ ἄλλην ἐπίρρωσιν ἔχειν δοκεῖ, τοῦτο ποιείτω.

g *Zoſim. Hiſtor. l. 2.*

3. *There is in the minds of men an infinite thirſt after the knowledg of Futurities.* What purchaſe would be thought (by many men) too great for the knowledg of ſuch things as theſe, *How long ſuch a King ſhall reign, who ſhall ſucceed to the Throne, when*

Antichriſt ſhall fall, how long they ſhall live, whom they ſhall marry, what ſhall be the iſſue of ſuch a War, when ſuch a cloud of affliction ſhall go off from their Tabernacle: this thirſt made the Religion of the *Gentiles* (that thought there was nothing beyond the Horizon of ſenſe) almoſt nothing but a continued Divination, an unwearied purſuit of this knowledg, in Oracles, in Omens, in Prophecies, in Prodigies, in Auguries, in the Signs of Heaven, in the Guts of the Sacrifice, and the like; and ſo far befooled them that they oft preferred the ravings of a mad-man, the chirpings of a Bird, the babble of an Aſtrologer, and the Dreams of an old woman, to greater veneration then *the words of the wiſe*; and made the ſmoke of his houſe appear a better Oracle then the man of counſel that dwelt in it. And an impatience of the ignorance of things to come, fooled the *Jews* as well as the *Gentiles* out of their Reaſon and Religion both at once, tempting them to [g] *aſk counſel at their ſtocks*, and to ſeek to *their Staff to declare* futurities *unto them*. Amongſt our ſelves a like affection for this knowledg betrays ſo many men to ſuch Opinions of Aſtrologers, Fortune-tellers, the predictions of Enthuſiaſts, and men upon a death-bed. Look as thoſe groſs vapors, which, while here below, are of no name and conſideration, but

[g] Hoſ. 4. 12.

as

as ſoon as they mount the Heavens, and carry light and fire with them, draw the eyes of men upon them, and are thought Divine preſages. Thus thoſe perſons, whoſe groſſneſs and dulneſs in all matters referring to Religion, Learning or common life, rendred them to the neglect or pity of ſober men, as ſoon as that black humor in them takes fire, and the men ſeem to ſpeak from Heaven, and to carry a prophetick light with them, they preſently become conſiderable, are advanced the common Subjects of Diſcourſe, their Prophecies are ſtudied more then the Bible, and men wonder to ſee how little thoſe fools-bolts miſt of the mark they were level'd unto.

Now the teeth of men have thus water'd for this *forbidden fruit*, the knowledg of things to come, partly from a weakneſs and childiſhneſs of temper whereby they cannot reliſh and digeſt the *ſtrong meat* of ſubſtantial Doctrine and ſolid argument; partly from ſome preſent uneaſineſs of condition, the duration whereof looks like an Eternity to their ſhort ſpirits, while they know no end thereof; partly in a vain hope that according as a good or an evil is propheſied concerning them, ſo their diligence may be applied to promote it or prevent it.

In conſideration of all the premiſes, I have applied my ſelf with the greater ſe-

riousnes to sink the reputation of those pretending Prophecies which so much ingross the studies and affections of many men, and to evince that pretenders to Predictions now, are, in all likelihood, *Prophets* onely *of the deceit of their own heart*, and that none of their Prophecies are to be attended to, as the certain indications of a future time.

Jer. 23. 26.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The Vanity of Vulgar Prophecies detected from the unworthineſs of the Pretenders to them.

All things and Perſons thought by the Heathens *to partake ſomewhat of a Prophetick Power.* Wiſdom *onely excluded by them from any ſhare in that gift. The Perſwaſion too much abetted by ſome* Chriſtians. *To reprehend which, the firſt* Conſideration *is propoſed. That Prophetick Maxim,* That Prophecy reſts not but upon a wiſe, a valiant and a rich man, *how underſtood by the Modern* Jews; *A conjecture concerning the Reaſon of it, in their ſenſe. How underſtood by the more Ancient* Jews, *ſhewn at large from their Writings. God's Prophets never mad in a Prophetick fit.* Wiſe-men *an antient addition of the Prophets: the title uſurped by the Antient* Philoſophers *and* Magicians. Jews, Chriſtians *and* Heathens *required Sanctity in order to true Prophecy. None born Prophets of the* Jews, *and why. Our pretended Prophets largely proved devoid of all true Prophetical qualifications, and therefore not creditable. The Church of* Rome *why ſo fruitful in ſuch Prophets.*

HOw much a fond affection for Prophecy had blinded the Minds of the Ethnick World, appears by their conceiting the Prophetick light as much diffuſed as the natural; and that as every thing did, according to its meaſure, participate of the [i] Goodneſs, ſo of the Preſcience of God. They regarded the whole World, and all the [k] parts thereof, but as ſo many ſofter

[i] *Sicut imago ipſius boni in omnibus Deum præfert, ſic in cunctis eſt veſtigium aliquod vaticinii.* Jambl. de Myſter. Ægyp. m. p. 89. [k] *Tanta eſt exuberantia Providentiæ ad oſtendenda nobis ſigna, ut etiam in calculis, virgis, lignis lapidibus, frumento, farina, indicia præbeat futurorum, &c.* Id. ib. p. 76.

Oracles: not a Star or Comet in the Firmament, not a Monſter on Earth, not a Staff in the Wood, not a Gut in the Sacrifice, not a Line in the Hand, but was thought prophetical. The Earth was thought pregnant with a [l] μάντικον ῥεῦμα & πνεῦμα θεότατον, a kind of *Prophetick efflux and moſt Divine Spirit*, able to inſpire the *Pythia* which ſtood over it. The Souls of all men were thought continually uttering ſome ſofter voices of Prophecy, but could not be heard till a Dream, or an Ecſtacy, or a Frenzy had huſh'd the clamors of an obſtreperous Reaſon; and therefore even perſons which could not ſpeak ſenſe, yet were preſumed able to ſpeak a Prophecy. In ſhort, every thing was thought pregnant with ſome Preſage, but onely Reaſon and *the Mind that had wiſdom*; for as to that, their Doctrine was [m] ἡ θνητὴ φρόνησις πολλάκις ἀποτρέφει & καταθέννυσι & ἐνθουσιασμόν, *mortal wiſdom* (ſtylo novo, *corrupt Reaſon*) *diverts and extinguiſheth that Enthuſiaſm* which would otherwiſe riſe upon the Soul. And I am ſorry to ſee, that amidſt all this light which falls upon us from Heaven, men ſhould yet be ſo little awakened out of the Dreams of *Gentiliſm*, as to think Divination almoſt as familiar a thing as the Heathens did; and that while we profeſs Miracles the Seal of Faith, and Prophecy the Rule, and *Prophet* the great

l *Plut.* de Def. Orac.

m *Plut.* de Def. Orac.

great title of the Lord thereof, we ſhould be ſo laviſh of theſe ſacred names, as to throw them away upon every prodigy which our Philoſophy cannot Salve; and ſhould ſtill conceit a monſter, a Comet, a great wind, the falling of the ſalt, or the tingling of the ears as prophetical as they did; and profane the ſacred title of prophecy by beſtowing it upon the crazy fancies of every idle viſioniſt; and be ready to call him a Prophet, that hath ſcarce reaſon or morality enough to intitle him *Man*.

That this is no ſcandal may in part appear from the fore-going Treatiſe, but will more fully by what time we diſmiſs our firſt Conſideration to reprehend the vanity of receiving theſe Vulgar Prophecies as Gods ſigns of the condition of a future time; which is this, *The Prophets which deliver them are generally devoid of all the Prophetick qualifications neceſſary to conciliate reverence to their Perſons and Prophecies*. What theſe are we may beſt learn from the Jewiſh Maſters; now with them, 'tis a ruling Maxim אין הנבואה שורה אל על חכם גבור ועשיר *Prophecy reſts not but upon a wiſe, a valiant and a rich man*: where by the *Wiſe man*, they underſtand a Man of prudence, and well practiced eſpecially in their Cabbaliſtical and traditional learning, in great price with them: the other words

Conſider. 1.

n *Maimonid. Præf. in Sed. Zer. & de fund. leg. c.* 7. *ſect.* 5.

words they expound in the rigid and usual sense and meaning of them; because observing in Scripture so much courage attending the prophetick Spirit, and generally great riches, excepting (o say they) in the instances of *Moses*, *Samuel*, *Amos* and *Jona*; who yet did not conflict with extreme necessities, nor yet (I think) any of the Prophets, except in a time of some common calamity, when their straits and indigencies were rather a p testimony to their office then a scandal. But I think the most rational account that can be given of this Maxim thus expounded, is this; The greatest assurances which *Faith* can require in the Prophet himself, are these two: that he appear a person not apt to be deceived himself (by taking the impressions of a strong Fancy for the *hand of God* upon him) which therefore, that first requisite of *wisdom* secures him from the Suspicion of: and that he appear a person not apt to deceive others. Now all aptness to deceive others grows q either from a fear of displeasing by some *greivous*, or hope of reward by some *grateful* prediction; and therefore that he may be proof against temptaion from fear or hope, they make him armed with valor and riches. And perhaps that *Maxim we met with before among the heathens (somewhat like this among the present Jews) might

o Vid. *Vorst. in Not. ad Maim.* p. 88.

p 2 Cor. 6. 2. Habac. 3. 17.

q Διὰ δύο ταῦτα οἱ ψευδομάντεις ἀπατῶσιν, ἢ διὰ τὸ ἐλπίζειν τί, ἢ διὰ τὸ φοβεῖσθαι. *Artemid. Oneirocr.* l. 2. c. 74.

* Ἰδιῶται καὶ πάντες ὡς εἰδὸν ὀνείρους δημοτικούς.

might carry some respects to some such considerations as these.

But I conceive the more Ancient Rabbies intended some richer Sence in this Maxim, understanding חכם *the Wise man*, in a more lax and general signification: so as to comprehend a person furnished with all the kinds of wisdom: with *Natural wisdom*, that is, Soundness of mind both before and in the time of the prophetick *afflatus*. Accordingly, [r] *Vorstius* tells us from the writings of the Jews, that among many other preparatory requisites to prophecy, the first they lay down is הכנה טבעית *a Natural disposition*, an εὐκρασία, a firm and sound constitution of body, that there appear no shew of a person crazy and sunk into phantasms. And [s] all writers ancient and modern have been careful to secure the Divine Prophets in the Opinion of being sober and rational, even while acted by the Prophetick Spirit, fully able to conceive and express what was sealed upon their minds by the *hand of God upon them*. God sometimes sent his Servants (as [t] *Epiphanius* distinguisheth) ἔκστασιν τοῦ ὕπνου, *the Ecstasy of sleep* (in the silence and composure whereof, the Soul might best attend the softer whisperings of the Spirit) οὐκ ἔκστασιν φρενῶν, *not an Ecstasy of mind*, whereby the Understanding became useless, and the

[r] *Vorst. ub. sup.*

[s] V. *Blondell's Treat. of the Sibyls.* l. 1. c. 25. *Huse Scher. log. Antiq. Heb.* l. 1. Dis. 4

[t] L. 1. *cont. Haeres.* 48.

the language confused and inconsequent: whereas the Ethnick Prophet was ὄργανον δαίμονος, *the Organ of the Devil*, sounding forth such discordant and rude airs as he inspired him with, of which the person scarce retained the remembrance when the fit was over. 'Tis noted of the Idol-Prophet, that he used not to prophecy עד שיפול בנכפר [u] till in the previous use of some extatical solemnities, he became frantick and epileptical.

[u] *Maim. Idolat. c. 6. sect. 1.*

To this Natural was superadded *a Divine Widom*, great skill in the Law of God, and the mysteries relating to the person and Kingdom of the *Meßiah*, in conjunction with a divine Philosophy, the knowledg of the works of Nature, with reference to piety and virtue, (the most valued learning of those whiter Ages of the World.) God did not [w] use to hazard the reputation of his Oracles by trusting them with such Prophets, whose rudeness would have rendered their persons and Message to the common scorn; but the prophetick Spirit found them or made them wise and understanding men: and that in so eminent a degree, that the title of חכמים *wise men* [x] seems to have been anciently the peculiar addition of Prophets and used characteristically, as *Scribe* was originally the distinctive title of *a Son of the Prophets*, and an expectant of that sacred

1 Pet. 1. 10.

[w] *Rarò sub V. T. Prophetiæ donum contingebat nisi iis qui diu in* ברושית, *i.* τοῖς φυσικοῖς, *& in* מרכב, *i.* τοῖς μὴ τὰ φυσικὰ *essent instituti. Cui rei inserviebant Prophetarum Scholæ.* Grot. in Sap. 7. 27.

[x] *Scripture seems to refer to these titles.* Prov. 1. 6. Jer. 8. 8, 9, 10. Mat. 23. 34. 1 Cor. 1. 20. Hos. 9. 7.

ſacred function: and therefore an ancient Doctor[y] of the Jewiſh Nation tells us אחר ארבעים שנה המין החכמים נקראים אנשי כנסת הגדולה after 40 *years* (the time they aſſign to prophecy after the ſecond Temple) *all the Wiſe-men were called the Men of the great Synagogue:* as conceiving that title now too Auguſt and ſacred for them to wear, as the Primitive Biſhops did the title of Apoſtles, to whoſe places but not to their meaſures of the Spirit they did ſucceed; and from hence it came to paſs, that all the Devils-prophets that aſſumed the skill, uſurpt alſo the ſtile of God's Prophets, and were intitled [z] *Wiſe men*; and perhaps the more ancient Philoſophers amongſt the *Gentiles*, as they borrowed their Wiſdom, ſo alſo the ſtile of σοφοὶ or *Wiſe men*, from the prophetick Doctors of the Jewiſh church ſo eminent in all the parts of Wiſdom.

y *Cited by M. Smith, Diſc of Prophef.* p. 269.

z Dan. 2. 12. 13. Exod. 7. 11.

a *Seld. de Jur Nat. & Gent.* l. 1. c. 1.

By עשיר *the rich man* there, they underſtand (as [b] *Maimonides* expounds the word) השמח בחלקו *the man that rejoyceth in his portion*, of riches, honor, health, pleaſure, which his father hath allotted to him, that is of *a contented* and *chearful* Spirit: for as that water which is not mudded with Earth nor ruffled with the wind, is moſt apt to receive and reflect an image, ſo that Minde which is not ſoyled with covetous

b *apud Cl. D. Pocock. Port. Moſ.* p. 227.

vetous desires as with earth, nor discomposed with anger or sorrow, as with wind, is most receptive of a prophetick image and impression. Accordingly we find none of Gods Prophets (nay none of his servants) blemished in Scripture for an inordinate love to this worlds goods; and so far did they stand from a morose and sowr humor, that we scarce read of any inspired persons but were [c] frequent in the use of the instruments of Musick, that by the soft and gentle airs thereof they might allay all undue heats, and charm their unquiet thoughts into stilness and silence.

[c] Exod. 15.21. 1 Sam. 10.5. 1 Chron. 25.1. 2 King. 3.15.

By that third word גבור they understood (I conceive) these three excellencies: (1.) *Great courage and presence of mind*: that which we may find all the Prophets in Scripture eminent for: Upon which account perhaps, the title of איתן, *stout* or *valiant*, became the almost distinctive Epithite of a Prophet. Our foremen-tioned [d] Master, speaking of *Abraham* describes him by the character of איתן זרח, *this stout one*. And some of the *Rabbins* conjecture, that the Moneth *Tisri* or *September* is stiled ירח איתנים, 1 *Kings* 8.2. *the moneth of the Valiant*, because (say they) three great Prophets were born therein. But this [e] singular presence of mind, I conceive rather an effect *of* then a disposi-tion

[d] *Maimon. de Idolat.* c. 1. sec. 6.

[e] Mic. 3.8. Isa. 50.7. Ezek. 3.9. Act. 4.13. 31.

tion *to* the prophetick Spirit. (2.) *Power over inordinate affections*, for ſo *Maimonides* having asked (upon occaſion of this Maxim) *who is the ſtrong man?* makes anſwer הכובש את יצרו, *the man that ſubdues his concupiſcence*; for herein the true ſtrength and vigor of the Soul reports it ſelf, that it can maintain its ſupremacy, and give check to all its rebel-paſſions: and therefore ἐγκράτεια (a word uſed in Scripture for temperance) ſignifies a having ſomewhat in ones power, and holding it within the compaſs of ones ſtrength. All inordinate paſſions the *Jews* uſed to ſtile *the vails of the Prophets*, which intercepted the light of Prophecy, ready otherwiſe to fall upon them; and therefore rightly judged, a power over the motions of the lower Soul eſſential to the Prophetick State. (3.) *Singular gravity and ſeverity of life and manners:* for in ſuch a ſence the word occurs, 2 *Sam.* 22.26. עם גבור תמים *with the ſtrongly* or heroically *perfect, thou wilt ſhew thy ſelf perfect.* And a late † learned Papiſt conceives that the title of גבורים *Gen.* 6. 4. was anciently the diſtinctive character of the Prophets, and that we are not there and in other places to underſtand (as we tranſlate it) *Gyants*, ſed *homines virtute & ſanctitate ad miraculum uſque potentes, & quaſi Gygantes:* for which

† *Jacob. Bold. de Eccleſ. cauſ. leg.* l. 1. c. 9. Pl. 18. 26.

which he gives ſeveral reaſons. It hath been the acknowledged doctrine both of *Jews*, *Chriſtians*, yea *Heathens*, that God never ſets up a prophetick light but in golden candle-ſticks, perſons of moſt refined minds and maners. Amongſt the Jews it obtained ſo much, that [g] *Maimonides* tells us that *hitherto there was never the man that would ſay that God did cauſe the Divine Majeſty to dwell in a bad man, but then only when he had reformed his life:* nay ſo aſſur'd were they in this Doctrine, that the ſame Maſter tells us [h] elſewhere, that if a prophet ariſe and *ſhew them a ſign or a wonder*, yet they *believe him not, if not found to have walked* בדרכי הנבואה בקדושה, *in the waies of prophecy, in holineſs and ſeparation from the world, in the ſtudy of Wiſdom*, &c And as much was this doctrine ſubſcribed unto by the *Chriſtians*. [i] *Origen* takes notice that the Prophets God ever ſpake by, were eminent διὰ τὸ τῆς βίου δυσμίμητον καὶ Ϛρόσεα ἔυλογον, for the *inimitable ſanctity and incomparable ſettledneſs of life and maners*; and many more beſides himſelf cited by a [k] Modern writer concerning Prophecy. And the very *Heathens* thought the Divine Majeſty did ſo hate to touch any unclean thing, that the prophetick illapſes could never grace an impure Soul. *Ariſtotle* (ſpeaking of prophetick dreams) tells us

g *Hucuſque nemo adhuc fuit, qui dicere voluerit, Deum Majeſtatem ſuam Divinam habitare facere in viro malo, ſed tum demũ ſi in melius ipſum prius converterit.* Maimon. Mor. Nevoc. P. 2. c. 32.

h *De fundam. leg.* ch. 7. ſec. 12 Vid. & *Phil. Jud. Quis rer. div. hæres.*

i *L.* 7. *cont. Celſ.* p. 336.

k *Chriſt. à Caſtro de Vaticin. l.* 3. c. 11. & 16.

us to suppose *that they are even sent from God*, ὁ μὴ βλητοὺς ὁ φαυλοτάτοις, ἀλλὰ τοῖς τυχοῦσι, ἀτόποις, *and that he sends them not to the best and wisest of men, but indifferently and as it happens, is an absurd conceit:* and therefore the wiser heathens prepared themselves for the reception of any divine communications by abstinencies, washings, some fantastical separations and sanctities; which proceeded upon a tacit sense of this truth, that the light of heaven cannot shine through dirt and filth, nor God ever make an unhallowed place or person, his Oracle. And if we consult Scripture, we shall find that howsoever the order of *Kings* by whom the Judicial, and of *Priests* by whom the Ceremonial law was administred, was maintained by a natural and hereditary succession of persons in the families of *David* and *Aron*; yet the order of *Prophets* (by whose care the Moral law was especially secured) was alwaies elective: never any born *Prophet* of the *Jews*, but the office was served by such persons as God found qualified, generally with wisdom, always with piety. And therefore our Savior tells us we may know false-Prophets [m] *by their fruits:* by some evil maners, or some doctrine which directly tends to incourage them. As for the instances of [n] *Amos*, *Balaam* and *Caiaphas*, which may be opposed

De Divin. per Insom. c. 1. & Iamblic. de myst. Æ gypt. cap. cui. tit. Inspirat. vacat. &c.

m Mat. 7. 15, 16.

n Amos 7. 14.

to what hath been ſaid, I ſhall return but this (for brevity's ſake) that they are *examples ſingular*, and in their occaſions extraordinary and therefore (like the jogging of young trees) do but more fully confirm and ſettle the rule they ſeem to ſhake.

Having thus fitted our prophetick ballance, if we proceed now to weigh our pretending Prophets therein they will be *found* greatly *wanting*. For the greater part of our little Prophets, appear devoid of that natural wiſdom, and ſoundneſs of mind of which the true prophets of God gave ſuch undoubted evidences. That word *Μάντεις Prophets* (deriving from *Μανία madneſs*) carries in the Original thereof a remembrance what kind of crack'd mettal, the Ethnick Prophets of old were generally made of: and it derives a great ſuſpicion upon our modern Prophets of ſome ſuch crazy temper, that ſo o great a part of theſe *ignes fatui* have riſen from the boggs of the Romiſh cells and hermitages, where the ſtrict ſeparations from Company and honeſt buſineſs, the high applauſes of an abſtract and ecſtatical devotion, the ſevere diſciplines of the body by exceſſive faſtings and ſcourgings, the ſtrict forbidding of Marriage to perſons not capable of that doctrine, the common Opinion of the frequent viſits of the *V. Mary* and other Saints vouchſaft to more ſevere

o *See a book intit.* Admirable and notable Prophecies uttered by 24 Roman Catholicks. *by* James Maxwel. *ed.* 1615.

severe livers, together with a strong opinion of meriting, by such devout singularities, the highest favors and intimacies with God, cannot easily fail of intoxicating, weaker heads especially, with the conceit of some extraordinary visions and prophetick inspirations. Accordingly such swarms of prophets and rapturists have flown out of those hives in some ages, that the *Council* of *Constance, Anno* 1415. was convened (as *Gerson* tells us) especially to determine which should pass for Canonical and which for Apocryphal prophets in that Church: and the many gross fallacies put, even upon wise men, by such frequent Visionists, put him upon writing those learned and pious pieces extant in the collection of his works, *De probatione Spirituum*, *De distinctione veratum visionum à falsis*, *De examine Doctrinarum*, and that Epistle intituled *Doctrina ad quendam Eremitam*, in all which he doth with great Sobriety and Christian zeal advise against the spreading infection of those more *solemn and demure frenzies*, Visions and pretended Prophecies. Nor perhaps will that term be thought a bolt let fly without aim, if the Reader consider further how frequent such prophetick visions and illapses are with these persons, Revelations usually are as familiar with them as Arguments with other men,

p *Tract. de Probat. Spir.*

those three [q] Prophets, *Kotterus*, *Christina*, and *Drabicius*, which of late years have made such a noise *in Germany* (as fruitful in Enthusiasts as *Africa* in monsters) had their weekly or dayly Visions, and heard from God almost every day: and the Visions of any one of them may compare numbers with all that the prophetick writings make mention of. A consideration that will give us a great jealousy that the most of them were but the visions of a disturbed Fancy, and the spurious issues of that inchanting humor of Melancholy which will present as many delusive images to a man as a conjurers glass. And perhaps, therefore did the holy Prophets record the year and the month when they received the divine illapses, that so their Visions and Prophecies might not be thought the fatal and therefore frequent workings of that black humor in them, but the arbitrary, and therefore oft interrupted, Visits of the true prophetick Spirit.

[q] Vid. *Revel. Div. Epitom.*

If we proceed next to make search into their acquired *Wisdom*, we shall soon perceive them greatly unworthy the title they assume: Is the hundredth part of them (as formerly) improved by any ingenuous education? are they not persons generally whose grosness and ignorance gives them a great confidence, credulity, and talkativeness, three gifts of singular use to men of their

their profession? are they not silly women, *S. Brigit*, *S. Hildegardis*, *S. Catherin Senensis*, *S. Teresia*, *S. Matild*, *S. Elizabeth*, which are of greatest name for Prophecy in the Romish Church? Who were the men in the late times that most affected the Opinion of Prophecy and inspiration, but they which (like the [r] Lyon in sacred writ) would gladly tear God's learned Prophets in pieces, but had a kindness for the Ass? The *Ebionites* (a sort of ancient Enthusiasts) [*] *Eusebius* tells took their name originally from the Hebrew word אביון signifying *poor*, ἀπὸ τῆς πτωχείας τῆς ἀγνοίας ἐπωνύμους, *because of the poverty of their understanding*: and [s] *Calvin* speaking of the Enthusiasts of his time, saith of them, *ignari sunt supra quam dici possit*; and as vast as that number of pretenders to revelation was in *Germany*, (even 40000) the [t] Historian relates, *in tanta hominum colluvie, ne unus quidem inventus traditur qui literas didicerit: in such a rout of people*, the followers of their Prophet *Muncer*, *not a man was found that could read*; and of [u] *David George* (that famous new New-light of *Germany* in the last Age) 'tis recorded, that *He was a man of little Learning, but of an extraordinary self-love.* 'Tis only because the men are in the dark, that every rotten imagination shines to them and looks like Prophecy.

r 1 Kin. 13. 18

* *lib.* 1. *c.* 26.

s *c.* 4. *cont. Libertin.*

t *Sleid. Comment. l.* 5.

u *Erat* David ille *homo exiguæ quidem peritiæ sed philautiæ maximæ*, Ub. Em. *l. de Spirit. David. Georg.* p. 47.

They are easily imposed upon by a busy fancy, because their undisciplin'd mind is unable to disabuse it self by an appeal to some sober and enduring principles.

And their Morals will appear as unworthy of the Prophetick dignity as their intellectuals. Are they not persons generally discontented with the present state of things, and therefore clap the mantle of *Samuel* over the devil of Sedition, and disguize the wishes *of* or encouragements *unto* some sudden change, in the sacred livery of a Prophecy? are they not persons generally exteremely indigent and therefore have their eies much *upon the rewards of Divination?* are they not persons commonly of a very morose and sowr humor, especially where they perceive themselves neglected? is there any shadow of that unforc'd gravity, real sanctity, contempt of the profits and applauses of this world which made the faces of God's Prophets to shine before men? What indifferency to the Opinions of men discovers it self in them? How much the notices of men affect them, appears from the many *Ecce's* and *Selah's* they affix to their prophetick Speeches if ever they chance to hit. Whereas we may observe that howsoever there be a very critical notice taken in the Gospels how all the lines both of typical and verbal prophecy centered

red in the person of our Savior, and how all were exactly fulfilled which referred to him (the more to assure our faith in so concerning an article as his being the true *Messiah*) yet there is so little intimation given *when* and *how* those other prophecies (in *Daniel* especially and the *Revelations*) of a more common and worldly reference, had their accomplishments, that there is scarce any argument wherein *Divines* more labor then in determining the places and seasons of them: and this, that God's Prophets might appear satisfied from themselves, and nothing sollicitous about the Opinion of a vain man. But especially notorious shall we find these pretending Prophets for Sensuallity and Sedition. The Gnosticks which arrogated such an intimacy with God stand branded with Sensuallity and opposition to Magistrates, in w Sacred writ. *Mahomet* was a most unclean and turbulent Prophet, the chief Doctrines taught and practiced by the *Munzerians* in *Germany*, were *Multiplicity of Wives*, and *No necessity of Magistracy*: and that false prophetess (whether person or Society) in the *Revelation* is called x *Jezebel*, who was a very turbulent and a very lascivious Woman. Whereas when the true Spirit of Prophecy was powred out upon men in the Primitive times, it made them famous especially for purity, and a perfect submissi-

w *Ep. S. Jud. ver.* 10. 2 Pet. 2. 19.

x Rev. 2. 20.

on to the moſt inhumane Magiſtrates.

To think now that the prophetick Spirit (if yet found in the world) balks all the more lively images of God therein, all thoſe perſons whoſe ſingular lives and learning were moſt likely to derive a reputation upon their meſſage, and dwells with thoſe which have ſcarce any thing of man, beſides ſpeech and figure, is to approach very near the judgment of the old Heathens ſubſcribed by *Celſus, that bruit beaſts were not only wiſer then Man-kind, but more dear to God:* a conceit eaſily pardonable to their *hypotheſis*, that God conveyed the knowledg of futurities to man through them. The Fathers thought it ſufficiently to reproach the faith of all the Ethnick Prophecies and Oracles, that they were delivered by perſons notorious for nothing but the groſsneſs of their minds or manners. It will here perhaps be oppoſed that very many modern Prophets have been perſons of unſtained lives, perſons whoſe piety and prophecy reflected a mutual grace upon each other. To which I anſwer, That we ſcarce ever met with a falſe prophet in Scripture but challenged for ſome enormity of life or doctrine, and therefore the Spirits which came out of the mouth of the Falſe Prophet are well emblem'd by frogs, which as they can only croke and make a noiſe, ſo they live in the mud,

y Οὐ μόνον σοφώτερα τὰ ἄλογα τῶν ζώων τ ἀνθρώπων φύσεως, ἀλλὰ καὶ θεοφιλέστερα. *Orig. cont. Celſ. l. 4. p. 227.*

z *Orig. cont. Celſ. l. 7. p. 337*

a Mic. 3. 5. 11. Ezec. 13. 22. 2 Pet. 2. 1, 2, 3. Mat. 7. 15.

b Rev. 16. 13.

mud, and are impure creatures. And as it was then, so it is generally now. *Paracelsus* (several of whose Prophecies are extant) was a walking Dunghil (so offensive and corrupt his life) if c story do not misreport him. d *Savanarola* (the *Italian* Prophet) was condemned, by the *Senate* of *Florence*, to the fire, for raising Seditions in the State. e *Drabicius* (so much the discourse of late) was excommunicate for his scandalous maners not long before he fell a propheſying. As for the Piety of the rest, it usually keeps pace with their Prophecy, being as fantastical as that, consisting in some pathetical Prayers, vehement expressions, bodily severities, affected anomalies and aversions from the innocent usages of men, not in a profound Humility and universal Charity. But if any of these persons were so really religious as it is pretended, I cannot weaken their title to Prophecy by this first Consideration, but may possibly effect it by some that shall succeed.

c *V.* Hornbeck *de Weigelian.*
d *Cominæus de Bel. Neapol.* l. 5.
e *Vis. Drabic. Histor. per F. A. C.* p. 131.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Vulgar Prophecies proved vain from the intrinsick circumstances of them.

Several circumstances in the matter and stile of those Prophecies instanced in, which speak them unworthy of God. Their being generally delivered in numbers noted as a character of Vanity, and why. The Devil's Oracles of old delivered usually in Verse. Why afterward in more natural and familiar forms. Tully's *exception against the pretended Oracles of the* Sibyls *justified. What appearance of Poetry in the Prophetick Writings. Those Prophecies noted to be delivered without any or a very long time prefixed for their accomplishment: Useless upon that account to any good end. Why* Scripture-Prophecies *may be allowed a long time to be accomplished in, but not* Vulgar. *The Devil concluded to influence these Vulgar Prophecies, and therefore not to be credited.*

Consider. 2. Our second Consideration, to evince the Vanity of these petty Oracles, is this: *Their very shape and character speak them greatly unworthy of God, who alone is able to declare the things that are to come.* For * they seem not at all level'd (what was † noted of old of all the Devil's Predictions) πρὸς τὴν ὠφέλειαν καὶ διόρθωσιν τῶν ἐν βίῳ, *to the bettering and correction of mens lives and manners,* but rather to Curiosity and Sedition in the State. * God is seldom owned in them as the Author of the Evils foretold, nor Repentance as the remedy. * They frequently betray men (by some ambiguous

† Orig. l. 7. cont. Cels. p. 335.

expression)

expreſſion) to the Evils they ſeem to warn them of. * They commonly come forth, and are moſt attended to in times of action and expectation, and therefore moſt likely to be then invented. * They are generally found (as lines drawn by no rule) to croſs and thwart one another. * The ſtile they are delivered in, commonly wears the Devil's livery, being ſo full of darkneſs and perplexity, that it may ſerve to any interpretation. * The knowledg they pretend to give, is profitable to no great end, whereas all the gifts of the Spirit are beſtowed πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον, to ſome common benefit. * They are generally delivered in ſuch affected barbariſms, halting meeter, fantaſtical pictures and emblems, which carry nothing of that grace and majeſty which attends the breathings of the true Spirit of Prophecy in Scripture. * Events are oft foretold in them, without thoſe circumſtances of time, place, perſons, and the like, which might aſſure the Events to be as well foreſeen as foretold when they come to paſs. * The matters foretold in them are cheap and trivial, and ſuch as it were infinitely better for men not to know. * The pretended Viſions, often monſtrous beyond the fictions of *Bedlam*, the ſtile ſluttering and uneven, like the heated ſpirits which conduct it. In ſhort, Let but any wiſe man read over the Prophecies of Scripture,

1 Cor. 12. 7.

ture, and then those of *Merlin* or *Nostredame*, and I believe he will scarce need an Argument to perswade him that they were never both inspired by the same Spirit.

But there are two things of more especial note in these Vulgar Prophecies, which are the Characters of Vanity: (1.) *Those Poetical numbers in which they are frequently delivered*: For whereas all the great Prophets of God delivered themselves in a natural and unforc'd order of words, the far greater part of these pretended Oracles of elder and later times are delivered in Verse, the better to inchant the fancies of the people, and to become observable; for an Oracle in Verse at once commands and courts the Soul to a regard thereof. The Devil's Oracles of old were so generally clothed in numbers, and those enamel'd with all the curiosities of art, that when they became about the times of *Plutarch* more familiar and simple, it was so much observed, that he wrote a Discourse upon the occasion, intitled περὶ τοῦ μὴ χρᾶν ἐμμέτρως νῦν τὴν Πυθίαν, *Why the Pythia doth not* now as heretofore *use Poetry* in her Oracular Speeches. To satisfie which Question, among other things, he tells his Reader, That h *God had now removed from his Oracles, Poetry, and variety of dialect, and circumlocution, and obscurity, and ordered them to speak to those which counsult them,*

h Θεὸς ἀφελὼν τὴν χρῆσιν ἔπη καὶ γλώττας καὶ περιφράσεις, καὶ ἀσάφειαν, οὕτω διδάσκει τοῖς χρωμένοις, &c.

as

as Kings to their People, and Maſters to their Scholars, in language intelligible and perſwaſive. But this rather ſhews the knot then unties it. The true Reaſon of this change of language was (I conceive) either becauſe men began to ſuſpect that where there was ſo much of man appearing in the Oracle there could not be much of God, and that Inſpiration is too hot and active a thing to move the ſober and cool pace of a Poem: or elſe becauſe the tempers of men were grown more ſedate, their minds & diſcourſes not ſo turgent and ecſtatical as heretofore; or becauſe he ſaw the clouds began to break, and God addreſt him to men in more natural and familiar ways, and therefore the Devil (who would never be out of faſhion) came nearer to the minds of men, and laid aſide the ſtate and ſolemnity he formerly ſpake to them with. Or perhaps becauſe the true Oracles of God, delivered in more eaſie and neglected language, began to lie more expoſed to the common view, and he would not have his to differ from them, but to imitate them. There is that coolneſs and curiouſneſs in a Verſe, which ſpeaks it greatly unſuitable to the vehemence and ſeriouſneſs of the Prophetick Spirit. It uſeth to beget tranſports of mind, which cannot bear the ſlowneſs and nicety of a Poem: for, as common and quotidian thoughts are beneath

neath the grace of a Verse; so great and vehement are above the straits thereof; they are impatient of borrowing feet, that are fit to fly. And therefore [i] *Tully* enters this judicious exception against the *Sibylline* Oracles of his time, that they were delivered in Verses, and many of those *Acrosticks*, and carried the evident tokens of art and contrivance; and therefore (saith he) *magis artis & diligentiæ erant, quam incitationis & motus*, they were rather the issue of *Art and diligence, then Enthusiasm and divine motion*. Not is the Exception entred by a [k] late learned Writer against this Exception of *Tully*, *That the Book of* Job *is Poetical, and some of the* Psalms *Acrosticks*, of any great moment; those writings being inspired by רוח הקדש *the Holy Ghost* (as the *Jews* distinguish) a more gentle and easie *afflatus*, that was still and sedate, and approach'd very near to the more rational and divine actings of a wel-disposed mind. Whereas the motions of the Prophetick Spirit (strictly so called) are quick and vehement, and such as the slow feet of a Verse cannot hold pace withal. And as for the Poetry in those Books, it is rather in the phrase and matter of them then in the measure. For if there be any set numbers observed in them, they are generally so mysteriously couch'd that none of the learned have been

i *Tull. de div.* l. 2.

k *Amyrald. Dissertat. de Trinit.*

been able yet to make any certain report of them. And therefore, upon this score, I ſhould make no great doubt to throw out the vaſt rabble of rhyming, clinching, verſing Prophets, as perſons that tell the worſt lies in the beſt maner.

Another thing which proclaims the Vanity of theſe Vulgar Prophecies, is, *the circumſtance of time with which they are generally delivered:* For either they prefix no time at all, or a very long period thereof to be accompliſh'd in; whereby they can miniſter neither to the honor of God nor the good of man. For they can give no teſtimony to his Providence or Preſcience, becauſe they will be thought to be fulfilled by chance, or the Prophecy (becauſe long ago delivered) will be forgotten, and the Event, when it comes, be thought to have ſtood in no relation at all to the Prophecy; and therefore it may perhaps, by the ſingularity thereof, beget wonder in men, but not piety. Nor can any man be warned by them to avoid an Evil, which may come (for ought he knows) not till his head be laid; nor can they give check to the ſins of the time, for men will be ready to ſay, like the ſcorners in the Prophet, *The days are prolonged, and every Viſion faileth.* Nor (if the Prophecy fail) ſhall the Prophet be alive to bear the ſhame of his impoſtures. The condition of thoſe Pro- Ezek. 12. 22.

phecies

phecies in ſacred Writ, which take Ages to be accompliſh'd in, is quite different; for they ſtand perpetuated in Scripture, and therefore fall under the daily notices of men; ſo that when the Events foretold come to paſs, they may readily be compared with the Prophecies; which, the more ancient date they bear, the more wonderful will they appear when accompliſh'd, and the more full reports will they make of their divine Original, and of the Scripture wherein they are found. For there is nothing doth ſo ſeal the Faith of the divine Inſpiration of Scripture, as the various Predictions therein, delivered at ſuch diſtant times and places, exactly accompliſh'd in their ſeaſons. But theſe Vulgar Prophecies are either not delivered to writing at all, or the writings forgotten, or look'd into but by a few curious perſons, and therefore eaſily altered and varied (as the Prophecies of *Merlin* have been) as might ſuit occaſions, or mens humors. Beſides, though even thoſe Scripture-Prophecies, which are of a more catholick concern (as thoſe relating to the *Meſſiah* and his Kingdom) received a ſlow accompliſhment, yet the Prophecies of a more confined reference did not uſe to go long before they were delivered of the Evils they were pregnant with, [m] eſpecially after men grew ſo wicked as to deride the patience of

m *See* Ezek. 12.22,23,24, 25.

of God, and to think they lived the longer for being threatned by his Prophets.

From all this it appears, in a great degree of probability, that the Father of Lies gave being to very many of these spurious Prophecies, that by these false he might derive a suspicion upon the true ones, or abuse the minds of men with vain hopes, panick fears, or curious impertinences. And will any man, that owns his Savior for his Prophet, receive the Devil for his Oracle? or when he is sick of things present, go to *the God of Ekron* (by attending to any Prophecy of his incitation) for quiet and resolution? Shall we value our Faith at so cheap a rate as to trust it with the Oracles of the Father of Lies? Can the Devil be presumed [n] *able* to give us true resolutions to any questions concerning the future? (Did God ever make him of his Councel, or deliver Times and Seasons into his power?) or *willing*, if able, to do it with any fair and single intentions? Have the beams of the *Sun of Righteousness* put out all the fires on his Altars, the Glory and Power of the Divine Oracles and Miracles spoiled his great trade of lying Oracles and Wonders, and shall our easiness and vanity encourage him to drive this more secret and little trade of Prophecies and Prodigies? Certainly that man is strangely desirous of news that will go to the Devil for intelligence.

[n] Isai. 41. 23. & chap. 44. 7.

CHAP. IV.

The vanity of these Prophecies evinc'd by their coming unattended with Signs.

The difference between a Sign and a wonder. Of what kind of Prophets no Sign was to be required. What method the Jews observed in the trial of Prophets. Miracles not a Sign required of all Prophets. Six Propherical Signs taken notice of. Our Savior's Prophecy confirmed by them all. Signs of the Prophet and of the Prophecy. None of these Vulgar Prophets give a Sign. Their pretended Sanctity no sufficient Sign. Their admired gift of Prayer of as little credit as that. Natural ardor how effectual to enable the power of speaking freely on the sudden: that confirmed by the example of the ancient Roman Orators. Quintilian. Julius λόγους of old, what. Why some men fluent wonely before company. The great efficacy of exalted imagination to assist an extemporary Rhetorick. Why vehement speeches so mightily move men. What kind of heats commendable in Religion. The powerful impression of these Prophecies no Sign of their Divinity. Divine impressions not distinguishable only by their power and evidence, asserted against some Jewish Rabbins. Artemidorus. Some accomplished Predictions, no safe Sign of the inspiration of our Modern Prophets.

THe Vanity of receiving these Prophecies as the certain indications of any future Event further appears from hence; *The Deliverers of them shew neither Sign nor Wonder to derive authority upon their persons and Prophecies.* Signs and Wonders so often coupled together, & sometimes used indifferently in the Writings of the Old and New Testament, are not alway the same thing; every

Consid. 3.

Wonder

Wonder or Miracle being indeed a Sign, and so often called; but every Sign is not (if we speak accurately) a Miracle. For τέρας *a Miracle*, is some mighty work transcendent to the powers and capacities of natural Agents; but [o] σημεῖον *a Sign*, is any extraordinary indication, besides, sufficient to make faith of the real inspiration of the person who pretends to speak from God.

[o] And so Eustathius seems to distinguish, saying, Ἐστι δὲ χωρὶς τούτων πάντων τέρατος, σημεῖον μὲ τὸ ἀδρὸ πόνον, ἢ ἀδρὸ φύσιν. ὃ καὶ τὸ ὀλίγον μὲν, ἀλλὰ θαυμαστὸν σημεῖον λέγεται. τέρας δὲ τὸ πολὺ μηνύμενον. *Iliad.* 2.

Now all persons that pretended of old to speak immediately from God, came attested with some Sign or Wonder; except they onely called men to obedience to some acknowledged Precept in the Law of *Moses*: for then (as [p] *Grotius*, I think, truly notes) no Sign or Wonder was required of them, because the condition of that Oeconomy, in which God had promised and the people more wanted such extraordinary Teachers, was a competent security to their Faith, that they were not imposed upon by any such pretender, especially if the forementioned prophetick qualifications were found about him. But if the inspired man required them to a faith of some Prediction or Doctrine, really or in appearance, new, he came always authorized by some divine Sign or Wonder. It is therefore a Maxim with the

[p] *Notandum est hoc, ab eo Propheta qui zanium hortatur ad implenda legis jussa, nulla signa requiri.* Grot. Not. in Deut. 18. 22.

Masters, that *when ever God sends a Prophet to a People, he gives him a Sign or a Wonder that the people may know God hath truly sent him.* Accordingly we meet with the *Jews* often demanding a Sign of our Savior as the Seal of his divine Mission and Prophecy; and what a singular respect they had to some Sign in the trial of Prophets, may appear, as from the sacred, so also, from the *Jewish* monuments. In consideration whereof, all the Impostors anciently, which usurp'd the title of Prophets, pretended to Signs, without which counterfeit Seal they and their Doctrine could never have past unsuspected among the people: and the better to ape a Miracle, most of those pretenders to Enthusiasm among the *Jews*, *Christians*, and *Heathens*, were Magicians, as might be made appear were it here pertinent. He that was Truth it self was content to borrow credit and authority (before men) to his Prophecy, from *Signs and Wonders*, Act. 2. 22.

Now Miracles were generally reserved to seal the person and message of such inspired persons as were to introduce a way of Worship, in truth or common Opinion, new: and therefore were never wrought (familiarly at least) but by *Moses* the Deliverer, *Elijah* and *Elisha* the Restorers, and our *Savior* the Fulfiller and Finisher of the Law, and his Disciples,

q *Maimonid. de Fundam. Leg. c. 7. sect. 11.*

r Mat. 12. 38. Luke 11. 29. Mat. 16. 1. Luke 23. 8.

s *Singularem signi (quod σημεῖον & אות vocant) in Prophetis dijudicandis rationē haberi, apud Judæos, tum è sacris literis tum è Magistrorum doctrinâ discimus.* Selden. de Synedr. l. 3. c. 6.

t Mat. 24. 24. Rev. 16. 13, 14 2 Thes. 2. 9. Deut. 13. 1. Act. 13. 6.

Disciples, the Preachers of a Gospel which was a [w] novel Doctrine in the opinion of men at that time. Scarce any Prophet was ἀντίθετος ἀνὴρ ἐργάτης, *a worker of Paradoxes* (as *Josephus* saith of our Savior) but he that was a Preacher of them. But however, all the Heralds of Heaven had the badg of some divine Signs, whereby unpossest minds might easily distinguish them from Impostors. Of these, it will suffice to my present purpose briefly to point to some few, which the Ages, to which Prophecy was promised, seem to have made the greatest reckoning of.

[w] Act. 17. 19.

As (1.) *The discovery of some present matter, evidently out of the compass of all humane knowledg*; as the secrets of the heart, the counsels of the bed-chamber, matters done at distance and with all possible secrecy, and the like. Such wonderful discoveries were of [x] great consideration with the people (in that time to which God had promised Prophecy) to assure the divine Mission of the Prophets: accordingly our Savior was [y] frequent in the use of such divine Signs, and so were the other Prophets it is likely: and therefore the *Jews*, which looked upon our Savior but as a Mock-Prophet, required him to a discovery of a [z] Mock-Secret, the person who smote him on the face while he was blindfolded, the

[x] Joh. 4. 17, 18, 19. 1 Cor. 14. 25.

[y] Mat. 21. 2. Luk. 22. 12, 13. 11. 17. 24. 38.

[z] 2 King. 6. 12. 2 Sam. 12. 12.

[a] Luk. 22. 64.

revealing whereof they called *Prophecy*, with discovery of such kind of Secrets being received as the Seals of a Prophetick Spirit.

(2.) *The constant coming to pass of things foretold in very* [b] *critical and contingent circumstances.* Many things the Prophets foretold to fall out within the compass of a few months or days, that so their Prophecies of a longer time might have the greater credit, and men might quickly understand that they were *established Prophets of the Lord.* Thus it is said, they knew [c] *Samuel* to be, when they saw *none of his* prophetick *words to fall to the ground:* and [d] *Ezekiel* having delivered his Prediction, adds, *And when this cometh to pass, then shall they know that a Prophet hath been among them.* And God himself, in the trial of Prophets, appointed the *Jews* to look to the issues of their Predictions, *Deut.* 18. 21, 22. Upon which Text, [e] *Maimonides* lets fall this gloss: *Cum quis, ipsum munus propheticum sibi vendicaverit, dicemus ei, ede nobis promissa, & refer nobis aliqua eorum quæ nova fecit tibi Dominus; quo referente, si recte evaserint promissa ejus omnia, hinc prophetiæ ejus veritatem percipiemus. Quod si in aliquo ipsorum, vel minutissimo, mendax fuerit, hinc mendacem eum esse cognoscemus. Atque hæc est expressa legis de hujusmodi probatione sententia.* So that it seems probable that the *Jews* required

b Non ex solo successu, verbis respondente, cognosci Prophetæ potest, nisi successui multas addiderit circumstantias quas nulla humana prudentia prospicere possit. Grot. Not. in Deut. 18. 22.

c 1 Sam. 3. 19, 20. and 9. 6.

d Ezek. 33. 33 Jer. 28. 9.

e Maimonid. Præfat. in Sed. Zer. & vers. D. Pocock, p. 19.

quired but the Sign of some accomplish'd Prediction (not always a Miracle) from the more common sort of Prophets: and therefore [f] some derive the *Hebrew* word אות a *Sign*, from אתה *venit*, because the most frequent Sign of Prophecy the Prophets gave, and the people required, was the coming to pass of some Prediction, delivered in such circumstances as no Eye of humane prudence could possibly foresee. (3.) *Some gifts and abilities extraordinary gotten suddenly and without humane industry, and abiding with them,* (for many possest persons have for some time [h] spoken languages, and made shew of singular abilities to discredit this prophetick Sign,) as to deliver himself *ex tempore* in very weighty sentences, to sing praises to God with singular art and dexterity upon the place, to interpret Scripture with great evidence of truth. All which were [i] comprized by the *Jewish* Doctors, in that degree of Prophecy they stiled (for distinction's sake) *Spiritus Sanctus*. This prophetick Sign our [k] Savior and his [l] followers did seal the truth of their Enthusiasm withal, as other Ancient Prophets had done before them. It is God onely that can make his way to the Soul immediately, and seal it with the abiding characters of Wisdom. (4.) *The attestation of some Person of whose Prophetick Spirit there is no question:* Ac-

f אות Gerundensis *derivat ab* אתה *venit, quoniam signum aliquod significat, ut si dixero, Ego sum Propheta verus à Deo missus, & hoc erit vobis signum, erat veniet locusta, asellus & bruchus.* Drus. in Deut. 18.

g 2 King. 7. 18 Jer. 28. 16, 17 Mat. 26. 34.

h *Vid. Psel. de variis Scripty. Δαιμ. & Ζ. Voss. de Idol. l. 3. c. 44. p. 969.*

i *Raymund. Pud. Fid. p. 99.*

k Jo. 7. 15, 16.

l Act. 4. 13. 1 Cor. 12. 10.

cording to that Maxim of the [m] Masters, נביא שהעיד לר נביא אחר רכו׳ *The Prophet of whom some other* undoubted *Prophet witnesseth that he is a Prophet, is assuredly a Prophet.* Accordingly they note that the testimony of [n] *Moses* to the divine Mission of *Joshua* procured him the Faith of the People before his conduct was credited from Heaven by any Miracle. Which rule I take to have a truth therein, though I demur upon that other they sometimes superadd to it, [o] *Every Prophet which arose, spake* in testimony *of his companion* in Prophecy. It is likely some [p] did. And therefore perhaps would our Savior have his Prophecy attested by [q] *John the Baptist* (generally reputed a Prophet by the people) that so this, as well as all other prophetick Signs, which ever singly and apart derived credit upon the person and message of any other inferior Prophet, might conspire in the Person and Prophecy of him the great Prophet of his Church. (5.) *The immediate voice of God from Heaven to him, before witnesses*, was another Sign of a Prophet [r] in ancient times; especially before the building of the Tabernacle: but when Prophecy became more common, God chose to speak to holy men [s] by Dreams and Visions: and perhaps the ceasing of that more usual way of divine Manifestation under the second Temple, might

m *Maimonid. Fund. leg. c. 10. sect. 9.*

n Deut. 31.7. Josh. 1.17.

o *Omnis vates qui surrexit locutus est de Prophetia socii sui.* Vorst. in Maim. de fund. leg. c. 10.

p 1 King. 3. 11,12.

q Joh. 5.32.

r Luk. 20.6.

s Psa. 99.6,7. Job 38.1. Exod. 24.16.

s Num. 12.6.

might occasion some to think he might possibly return to the more ancient way of revealing himself, by a *Bath Kol*, a voice from heaven. However, with this also Sign God dignified our Savior. (8.) *The general prevalency of their prayers, especially in matters of a more publick reference, was a very probable sign of true Prophets anciently.* God assigns this as the Characteristick note between false and true Prophets, that one had great interest and power in the Court of heaven, and the other none at all. *If they be Prophets, and if the word of the Lord be with them, let them now make intercession to the Lord of Hosts, &c.* This was a sign of a Prophet, because it was a sign he prayed by a special instinct from God, whereby he knew what blessings God was ready to bestow; and besides, it was a signe of the singular favor he had with God, and therefore we shall find an high value set upon the the prayers of a Prophet both by God and men, x in Scripture. And perhaps in confidence of the y prevalence of his prayers some people that held our Savior for a great Prophet though not the *Messiah*, brought their young children to him *that he might lay his hands upon them and pray*, Matth. 19. 13. This prophetick sign also attested the Prophecy of our Bl. Savior, *Joh.* 11. 42.

a 2 Pet. 1. 19. Joh. 12. 28.

w Jer. 27. 18. Ezek. 13. 6.

x Gen. 20. 7. 1 Sam. 7. 5. Deut. 9. 18. 20. 26. 2 King. 2. 12. Mat. 18. 19.

y *Observandum est Prophetarum preces esse efficaces, plurimum conferre ad vitam, & per aliquas preces ad Deum fudevint.* Principium. in Gen. 20. 7.

These

These were some of those more general signs which gave testimony to the Divine Mission of a Prophet: but besides these, there were also frequently added some particular signs of the truth of this or that extraordinary prediction, especially if of some matter of greater import, of the truth whereof it was somewhat necessary the people should have a full assurance: the instances whereof are of familiar occurrence in the Book of God, and therefore the Disciples, when our Savior had foretold an Event so great, as the destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, demanded of him a sign both of the truth and time of the accomplishment of that Prophecy. *Master when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when all these things shall come to pass?* These particular and almost present signs gave assurance that the Prophet did not deliver conjectures but Prophecies, and the doubling thus of his Prophecy was a sign that the thing was certain with God, and not foretold conditionally only, (as judgments and blessings often were) and that the agreement between the Prediction and the Event when coming to pass, was not a chance but a Providence. So that these were more immediately the signs of the *Prophecy*, as the other six of the *Prophet*.

a K. 38.7. Jer. 44.29. 1 Sam. 2.34. 1 King. 13. 2,3 2 King. 20. 8. 1 Sam. 2.1,2,3

b Luke 21.7.

From all this, it seems more then probable

table, that all true Prophets came distinguished by some divine sign, although it appear not now from Scripture, what particular sign it was which gave credit to each Prophet therein mentioned; and that anciently Men were wiser then to let every pretended pass current, as soon as ever it had the image of the King of heaven stamps upon it, or carryed the face of an inspiration from God. Men then understood Prophesy, upon many accounts, too much exposed to suspicion of imposture to be credited upon the single testimony of every zealous pretender thereunto: And therefore all Prophets though they came not recommended by equal testimony (the occasions they were to serve not being of equal moment) yet still with what might suffice to place their divine Mission beyond a question, some were attested by Wonders, some by signs, some by both. If then (to apply all this to the occasion) Men would once be so advised as to demand some such divine sign as first heretofore to credit the Prophetick function of these pretended Prophets, they would certainly all sneak away like Jugglers when called to their Miracle. What have they generally beyond Ordinary besides ignorance and confidence? What Miracle or Signe doth God bear witness to their Mission by? what have all the great *Speaking* men of

Enthu-

Enthusiasts been at last delivered of, beside the crude air of some flatulent imagination? have they, after all the noise they have made, blest the world with the discovery of any useful secret in Philosophy or Divinity? are not Scripture prophecies as dark, diseases as desperate, nature vail'd as much now as in former Ages? do not all their books (like the barren fig-tree) bear *leaves only*, a few rampant Metaphors, and some higher straines of prophetick Scripture, jumbled together like the images of a dream? shall we then appear so unworthy of the title we carry as to think a few extatical looks and Scripture phrases sufficient to intitle a man to the Opinion of רואה *a Master of light?* as the *Jews* use to stile a Prophet: It is not to be imagined that God would send Prophecy into the world, and not have it regarded, or that it can be regarded, if it come attended with nothing whereby it can be known. When the Apostles had such an extraordinary measure of the Spirit, there was φανερωσις πνευματος, *a manifestation of the Spirit*; as the extraordinary Measure of the Spirit then poured out gave c testimony to the Gospel, so the mighty signs and wonders which attended it gave testimony to the Spirit.

c Gal. 3. 2.

To all this, I know, it will be opposed that many of these modern Prophets come atten-

attended with signs sufficient to the man who is of an humble and teachable temper, whom alone God seeks to satisfie: *viz.* these four, *Eminent Sanctity. A very liberal and powerful gift of Prayer. The mighty energy and impression of their Visions and Prophecies. The accomplishment of very many of their Predictions.* To all which I shall return a few words.

First, We are told that they are persons of *very eminent Sanctity*, that are wholy abstract from the pleasures and honors of this world, and have no fleshly relishes appearing in them, and therefore 'tis most unlikely that they would deceive others or should be deceived themselves by a false Prophecy. To which I answer, There is nothing more misjudged then Sanctity, 'tis too commonly thought to stand *in some more solemn looks at a Sacrament, in visiting of an holy shrine, in some extatical devotions, in the use of some interpreting garbs, faces and Phrases, in caressing of Christ by some pretty attributes, in declaiming with much zeal against some odious names, heresie, Antichrist and Superstition, in carrying it very morosely towards men of a different form from ones self, in some severer disciplines and neglects of the body*: and therefore 'tis unsafe trusting our faith with a prophecy upon a report of the sanctity of the Prophet. Besides, no

men

more subject to such delusions, then men of devout affections, if of strong fancies, impressive tempers, and weak intellectuals: for in such persons, an indiscreet use of Religion by very pensive and solemn thoughts, affected retirements and silences, too intense Meditations, continual fervors and endeavored heats, unreasonable fastings and watchings, the neglect of innocent diversions and relaxations, especially if joyn'd with the continual study of some dark prophecies and visions in Scripture (more proper entertainments for Men of great learning) cannot easily fail of intoxicating the mind with wild and extravagant imaginations. The overstraining of them by such intense devotions and perpetual fervors, hath produced so many crack'd brains, pretended Prophets and visionists in the Religious houses of the *Romish* Church; who is yet so ill advised as to cite them as the proofs of that prophetick Spirit she lays claim unto. Moreover, It hath ever been the Policy of the Devil to do the Church the greatest Mischief by men of greatest name for Religion. He knows good men are soonest decoyed by those which seem of a feather with themselves, and that error will sooner be entertained from a pious then truth from a profane person. And therefore the first among the four things which they lay destroy

d *De multis in religione & austeritate vitæ constitutis, incredibilia fere sunt quæ à doctis testibus referentibus audivi.* Gers. de dist. Ver. Vil. à fals.

fuoy the world; number, *Religion now that it is a Fool*; God perhaps permits it thus to be, that men might learn to make him only *Lord* of their Faith, and not to give an absolute trust (his due alone) to the wisest or best of Men. Good men are no more exempt from mistakes and Inacies, then they are from a feaver or the infirmities of Age.

But we are further told that many of these prophetick Persons are sealed by the *singular gift of praying in the Holy Ghost*. Their lips seem touch'd by a *coal from the altar*, so fervent and so Scripture-like are the expressions they bespeak God withall upon the suddain. Nature useth to be eloquent indeed in its own concerns, but lips and is a child in the things of heaven, useth to speak to God in language of ice, words that freeze and even dy between the lips; and besides, where words come without forcing, and sit handsomely about the matter, *datur in illa hora*, 'tis (surely) *not they which speak but the Holy-Ghost which speaketh in them*. Nature seems not sufficient for such singular performances upon the place. Moreover, their words (like arrows pointed and fired) make a very deep and abiding impression upon the hearts of the hearers, the Souls of men become half unbodyed, while they hang upon the lips of these extraordinary

traordinary persons; and therefore surely *non vox hominum sonat*, there is more in these words then the voice of a Man, and the charms of a little fervent and Pathetical language.

I answer, This devout *ardor* with the effects consequent thereunto, doth extremely inchant the minds of men with great Opinions of the Men in whom it appears, and is readily received (like the divine fire that came down upon the Sacrifice) as the testimony of God to the person and to all he offers. *David George* obtained the repute of a Prophet chiefly e *assiduo ac ardenti in speciem preces ad Deum fundendi studio*. Whereas all these strange *phænomena* may be salved by meer mechanical principles, all generally being but the issue of a natural pregnancy and *fervor* of temper, exerting it self in fluent words tinctured with religion and Scripture phrases. Where there is *naturalis quædam animi mobilitas* (which *Quintilian* requires in order to speaking well *ex tempore*) a natural moveableness of Soul, whereby it is inabled to turn it self nimbly and with ease to new thoughts and words, and this assisted (or rather created) by some more brisk and active spirits, it may equal, perhaps exceed the performances of more advised thoughts. A moderate heat, wherein all the Spirits flow

e Spanhem. de Orig. Anabap. sec. 24.

flow to their proper principles and fountains, the vital to the heart, and the animal to the brain, and are put into quick but manageable motions, doth raise in a man a more fine and exquisite power of perception, and cause the images of things to appear more distinct, and to come faster upon his mind, then otherwise they would, and by consequence make the Understanding more pregnant, and the expressions more fluent and easy. And therefore when the Orators of old attributed their more fortunate performances and rhetorical inlargements in their *extempore* declamations before the people, (then much in use) to the special assistance and incitation of God; *Quintilian* judiciously gives them to the present heat and fermentation of spirits, the great instruments whereby the Soul performs all its works in this embodied state. His words are these, [f] *Si quem calor ac Spiritus subit, frequenter accidit, ut successum extemporalem consequi cura non possit; Deum tunc adfuisse, Veteres Oratores aiebant, sed ratio manifesta est: nam bene concepti affectus & recentes rerum imagines continuo impetu feruntur, quæ nonnunquam mora stili refrigescunt, & dilatæ non revertuntur.* Which words I shall dismiss untranslated, lest (like liquors put into another vessel) they should contract a flatness and loose Spirits.

[f] Inst. Orat. l. 10. c. 7.

Now these words of *Quintilian* give a good account of the *extempore* felicities of the Orators of those times, which themselves had such great thoughts of, that *Jesus ἐνθουσιᾷν to speak divinely* or by inspiration was the usual phrase whereby they expresst speaking fluently, pathetically and with coherence, without more thoughts then just uttered the words they spake. And that Spirit which generally inspires our Divine Orators and makes them run over with such winning rhetorick, is much of kind with that which incited those civil ones, *viz.* a natural *fervor* of temper, excited by some superficial affection, and assisted by a *plenty* of fit expressions made familiar to them by study and custom. Hence we find men of very evil lives *Ignatius*, *Hacket*, and others eminent for this religious Rhetorick and fervor; and many of these Orators have confest themselves greatly *straitned* and *bound up* (as the phrase is) when in their closets, who are carried with full sails when to use before a [l] Company; because desire of Opinion makes them more concerned, excites affection, and consequently that ardor so essential to a smooth performance. They are (in the Phrase of *Plato*) *θεομανεῖς full of the Theater*,

g V. *Francis. Ferr. de Acclamationib. Vet.* l. 3. c. 14.

i *Interdum fiebat ut preces inter & sacrificia, tantis ardoribus æstuaret, ut omnes partes corporis exardescerent, faciesinstar purpuræ ruberet,* &c. Vit. & glor. S. Ignat. per. Anon. c. 9. & Dr. *Casaub. Enthus. m. p.* 214.

l *Extemporalis actio* auditorum frequentia *ut miles tuba signorum excitatur, secundos impetus auget placendi cupido, velo, inio.* Quintil. l. 10. c. 7.

are

are touched with applause, and therefore act to the height of themselves in publick, but are cold and indifferent where the breath of man is wanting to excite and blow them up.

Now our admired Prophets having this natural fervor and pregnancy of Spirit to wing their Fancies, and this heat intended by the new forces of an ἄτμος ἐνθεος (as *Longinus* stiles the Earthy vapor which inspired the *Pythia*) an enthusiastick vapor of heated Melancholy arising from the *hypochondria*, it cannot fail of displaying it self in such rapturous and lofty strains of divine rhetorick, as shall be verily thought to flow *mere vena Israelis*, from the same Divine Spirit which inspired the Prophets: when the persons are but heightned by a fume somewhat more gross and unruly then that which inspires our common Poets, whose more happy heats and sprucer fancies have been thought the issue of borrowed Spirits, and therefore the blood of the grape been generally vouched by them the most natural exciter of the poetick vein. Besides, these Prophets are much advantaged for a more lively imitation of Enthusiasm above the more Vulgar pretenders to it, by an exalted Imagination. For the most vehement Objects of Religion, *God, Heaven, Hell, the glories of the new* Hierusalem, *some*

[m] Ps. 68. 26.

prophetick Scheams, being made familiar to their ſofter fancies, ſtand before their minds in very diſtinct and affecting *ideas*. Now where imagination is thus boiled up and often rub'd upon by the moſt moving objects, it fails not of raiſing affections and and conſequently expreſſions great and vehement as the objects are from whence they do ariſe. And therefore [n] *Quintilian*, to aſſiſt the power of Speaking very movingly and fluently *extempore* (which the *Orators* of thoſe times ſo much endeavoured) adviſeth to imprint upon imagination, φαντασίας, the images of the things we are to ſpeak about: as if we were to ſpeak about the murder of any perſon, ſuddenly to make all the terrible images of the bleeding man to walk upon the Scene of Phancy, and to ſet (as it were) before our eyes all the black circumſtances of the action, thereby to quicken affection, and by that Expreſſion.

n *Quintil. Inſtit. Orat. l. 6. c. 3.*

I intend not theſe words to ſtifle the devout ardors of holy men diſplayed in affectionate [o] *pantings after God* and a divine Nature, in deſires too big for words, divine reliſhes, and that unforced Rhetorick which the *abundance of their hearts* inſtructs them unto, when to beſpeak God in private. For our Religion could no more pleaſe our ſelves then God, if it could not raviſh the heart

o Pſ. 42. 1.

heart as well as renew it, if it were a kind of *caput mortuum*, an heavy, ſtark, inſipid thing, without heat and Spirit. Heat and zeal is the *calidum innatum* of the *New Man*, without which he neither lives nor moves. Only care muſt be had, that this heat and zeal (like the flame at *Pentecoſt*) aſpire and mount upward, but without firing the Perſons head, and making him of too hot and firy a temper to bear any confinement of Opinion or practice, by Scripture, laws or the Reaſons of wiſe men. I have in all this deſigned only the diſparagement of the ignorant imaginations of thoſe men, which (like the heathens of old) look upon heat and noiſe, words full of charms thrown out without method or meaſure upon the ſuddain, and very vehement affections, the ſymptomes of a perſon *full of God*, and managed by ſome power tranſcendent to natural. Whereas all theſe things, howſoever, like Meteors, they carry an heavenly appearance in the eie of ignorance, we have found of a more common and baſe Extraction. Nor is the mighty power they may have over the Spirits of others, any argument to the contrary; all fluent language, feathered with ſoft and delicate phraſes, and pointed with pathetical accents, being naturally fitted (as the ſtage will aſſure us) to make a deep impreſsion upon the heart. P *Plu-*

P Ἐκ ἐλαχίστου καὶ περάτων τοῦ ἀκροωμένου μιμεῖσθαι καὶ μαλάττοντες, καὶ πείθοντες. Plut. περὶ τῦ ἀκ.

tarch speaking of that rare Art, those Masters of Language, the *Grecian Sophists*, discovered in composing and delivering of their Orations, tells us, that *they raised up a kind of Bacchical Enthusiasm, and transported their hearers, with some honey words, soft and effeminate phrases and accents, and a kind of singing tones.* And no doubt those hearers, of whom he there speaks, which used to applaud their Orators at the end of their Declamations with a θεῖως, θεοφορήτως, δαιμονίως, ἀνεκφοίτως, *divinely, heavenly, inimitably* spoken; found themselves as much stirred and moved as many a Man at a Sermon, who yet thinks 'tis not the Art of the Preacher but the Spirit of God that warms and excites him.

It is further alledged in vindication of these Prophecies, that they are no evanid and languishing imaginations; but come upon the minds of those that have them with a light and evidence which bears before it all scruple about their divine Original: Now the Devil or Melancholy cannot possibly seal the mind with Opinions which carry that energy with them as these do: so that the very great Strength of the Impressions (like that of *Samson*) speaks the mighty presence of God with them: For how did the Prophets of God of old know themselves divinely incited but by feel-

feeling *the hand of God strong upon them*, and his [q] *word in their heart as a burning fire shut up within their bones*, whence they were *weary of forbearing and could not stay*.

[q] Jer. 20. 9. 11.

I answer, whence these prophetick phancies come to be thus vigorous and importunate shall be inquired in due place; for the present, I assert (*yet not I but the* [r] *Lord*) that there may be an ἐνέργεια πλάνης, *energy of Error* as well as Truth, which may strongly carry a man quite out of the hearing of what ever reason may be tendered to disabuse him. [s] *Theodoret* tells us of some Enthusiasts of his time, which *receiving the vigorous working of some* Dæmon *in them, took it to be the presence of the Holy Ghost.* And [t] *Gerson* of many others, *of which every one had it* (he said) *certainly revealed to him that he should be Pope.* Amongst which *there was one of great name and learning which left this* revelation *in writing with his own hand, and endeavoured to make it good by many arguments and conjectures*: and we find in Scripture, false Prophets as much pretending plerophories and strength of perswasion as the true. As for those Characters whereby Gods Prophets were enabled to distinguish infallibly a divine

[r] 2 Thess. 2. 11.

[s] Δαίμονός τινος ἐνέργειαν εἰσδεχόμενοι, καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου παρουσίαν, τοῦτο καταλαμβάνοντες. Hist. Eccles. l. 4. c. 10.

[t] *Inter hos quidam bene literatus & famosus hoc etiam propria manu in scriptis, quæ legi, reliquit & argumentis & conjecturis plurimis asserere conatus est.* J. Gers. De distinct. ver. vis. à falsis.

dream and prophetick impreſſion, in their own minds, from the deluſions of the Devil or Phancy, it is extremely difficult at this diſtance from that Age of Prophecy, clearly to aſſign them. [u] A late learned writer, from *Aberbanel* and *Maimonides*, in this matter thus ventures to reſolve his Reader: *A Prophet when he is aſleep may diſtinguiſh a Prophetical dream and that which is not ſuch, by the vigor and livelineſs of the perception, whereby he apprehends the thing propounded, or elſe by the imbecility and weakeneſs thereof.* And therefore *Maimon. hath ſaid well.* All Prophecy makes it ſelf known to the Prophet that it is Prophecy indeed, *that is, makes it ſelf known to the Prophet, by the ſtrength and vigor of the perception, ſo that his mind is freed from all ſcruple whatſoever about it.* (A notion which he there endeavours to build up by Scriptures, but how ſhort they fall of reaching the proof thereof, the indifferent Reader may eaſily perceive.) But though I doubt not but the divine illapſes made a very deep impreſſion upon the minds of holy men, and came attended with ſuch light and evidence as chaſed away all ſhadow of ſcruple about their divine Original, yet I think to aſſert this vivacity of impreſſion the diſtinctive character of divine from pretending Enthuſiaſms and dreams, is neither true nor ſafe.

[u] Mr. Smith. *Diſc. of Prophecies*, c. 4.

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Which will perhaps appear by what time I have ſhewn the Reader, that the Ancient Interpreters of Dreams proceeded by ſome ſuch rule as this. *Artemidorus* gives this difference between Ὄνειρος & Ἐνύπνιον, a *natural* and *divine Dream*: Ἐνύπνιον ἔργον κενὸν φαντάσματος, *a common Dream is the meer figment of men aſleep*, of which he ſaith, *So far as it appears in ſleep it is vigorous and active upon the Scene of Fancy, but as ſoon as the ſleep determines, that vaniſheth from the thoughts.* But then Ὄνειρος a divinatory *Dream*, ἐνεργεῖ ἀεὶ, *hath a more laſting energy upon the mind, creates a regard of the futurities declared in it, ingageth endeavor, and is made apt extreamly to ſtir up and excite the Soul that hath it.* Beſides, if that power and evidence, with which a conceit may bear down the mind to a perſwaſion thereof, may be preferred the Sign of its divine Original, how many men ſhall we ſoon have that will look demurely, and tell the World (as the Sons of Fancy among us uſed to do) that *God hath made out this or that to them*, and that *this is much upon their ſpirits*, and therefore paſt queſtion an intimation from God?

w Ὅσον μὲν ἐνύπνιόν ἐστιν, ἐνεργεῖ, παυομένου δὲ τοῦ ὕπνου ἀφανίζεται. x Ὧν εἰς ὀλίγα σημαίνουσι προπαροξύνουσι δὲ καὶ μᾶλλον τῶν, ὅταν ὕπνος ἐνεργεῖ, ἅπαντας εἰς χειρήσεις, ἐγείρειν τε καὶ ὀρέγειν τῇ ψυχῇ πόθους. Artemid. Oneiroc. l. 1. c. 1.

As for thoſe accompliſh'd Predictions brought to ſupport the falling credit of theſe Modern Prophets, they will prove but *a foot out of joint*. For there was no prophe- z Prov. 25. 19.

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tick Sign foregoing to assure the accomplishment to be any other then a lucky hit. And besides, the [a] Papists, nay the [b] Heathens, tell us (and men must be willing to give that Faith they expect from others) of many instances of such Predictions delivered by their *Popes, Religioso's, Diviners, Oracles*, very particularly accomplish'd. Now then I demand, were these Prophecies *from Heaven, or from Men?* If *from Heaven*, why then do many men think with no more favor of the Heathens and Papists, to whom God seems to give *the testimony of Jesus, the Spirit of Prophecy?* If *from men* (assisted by civil Prudence or evil Spirits) then all accomplish'd Predictions are not concluding Arguments of the divine Inspiration of the Authors. But because God in the trial of Prophets hath [c] directed us to a regard of the issues of their Prophecies, this matter may seem to merit a more close and particular Consideration, to which therefore I shall next apply my self.

[a] See several Examples in *Bor. Eugubin. de Sig. Eccles.* l. 6. c. 2.

[b] *Tul. de Div.* l. 1. *Sibyllas prævidisse apud multas Gentes pericula divinitus imminentia admonuisse populos*, &c. Jambl. de Myst. Ægypt. p. 59.

[c] Deut. 18. 21, 22.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The failing of Vulgar Prophecies an assurance of their Vanity.

Vulgar Prophecies referring to the Publick, generally false: shut proved from Justin Martyr, *and the falshood of some Modern Prophecies particularly instanced in. A failure but in a circumstance a sign of the forgery of the whole Prophecy, and why: A twofold account given of the pretended accomplishments of some Modern Prophecies. How far it seems fitting that Prophecies should descend to the circumstances of Events. An account why some of these Prophecies hit and others miss. All Divine Prophecies fulfilled which were absolutely delivered. Some Characters to distinguish such Prophecies by.*

THat which may yet more fully secure us in a perswasion of the Vanity of all these Modern Prophecies, is this: *All these unattested Prophets* generally *fail in all their Prophecies, but* always *in some.* Generally in all; *viz.* such are most fit to assure men of their divine Inspiration, as those onely are which are of a publick reference. [d] *Jeremiah* tells us, that the *Prophets which had been before him of old, prophesied both against many Countries, and against great Kingdoms, of War and of Evil and of Pestilence*; as they also did sometimes of great National Blessings. Now the coming to pass of such Prophecies was the most undoubted evidence of their Divinity: for though the Devil may be presumed able to bring about some

Considerat. 4.

d Jer. 28. 8.

some little turns in the lives of private men, yet *the ſpirit of the living creature* onely moves in thoſe great *Wheels*, the turns in States are ſoly under the particular conduct of God; thoſe Wheels are too great for him to move one way or other. And therefore [e] *Juſtin Martyr*, when the accompliſh'd Predictions of the Ethnick Prophets were oppoſed to him, returns this judicious Anſwer; *No Event which the Ethnick Prophets foretold, either againſt the Truth of God, or his Worſhippers, or referring to the publick Affairs of the* Grecian *States, ever came to paſs*; though perhaps ſome matters of a more narrow concern might, which fell more within the Devil's compaſs. An Obſervation more fully juſtified in the pretending Prophets of later times: what is become of all the Oracular leaves of *Grebner*? hath not *the wind taken them away, and the whirlwind ſcattered them?* (as it did thoſe of the *Sibyl*.) *He propheſied* (ſaith[f] Mr *Mede*) *great matters of* Henry *the fourth of* France, *which proved clean contrary*; *of* Queen Elizabeth, *and other Princes, which never came to paſs: I have, I know not how often to ſatisfie one or other, told them as I now tell you, and yet every five or ſix years it comes up again as if it had never been diſcovered. Men are prone to believe any thing they would have*, &c. And how have all the ſwelling Prophecies

e Οὐδὲν ὧν προεῖπον οἱ μάντεις (ἐθνικοὶ) ἢ κατὰ τῆς ἀληθείας θεοῦ, ἢ τῶν σεβομένων αὐτὸν, ἢ ὑπὲρ τῶν κοινῶν τῶν Ἑλλήνων πραγμάτων ἢ ἐκβὰν ἐγένετο, &c. Reſp. ad Orthod. q. 2.

f *V.* Mr *Medes* Letter to Mr *Hartlib*, Part. 4. p. 652.

Prophecies of *Cotterus*, *Christina Poniatovia*, and *Drabicius*, concerning the sudden Conversion of the *Turks*, the Establishment of the *German* Churches by *Frederick* King of *Bohemia* and *Gustavus* of *Sweden*, the sudden Propagation of the Gospel throughout the World, the advancement first of *Ragotzi* the Father, and then the Son and then the Brother, to the Crown of *Hungary*, of the dreadful overthrow of the Papacy (many of them delivered about fifty years ago) been delivered of nothing but the wind? even their great [g] Patrons themselves being witnesses; while yet so inchanted with the Opinion of them as to publish them now as the Oracles of God; when Divine Providence hath encouraged sober Christians to hiss them out of the World; And indeed it is so [h] the usage of Divine Providence to shame the impatience and curiosity of men discovered in attending to such Prophecies, that I perswade my self it is next to impossible to instance a Modern Prophecy referring to the Publick, that speaks distinctly as to words and time of accomplishment, that failed not in the substance or some eminent circumstance thereof. Now a fayleur but in a tittle, is a *dead Flie* sufficient to make the whole Prophecy smell strongly of an imposture. Of Divine Prophecies ולא רקיק ולא גליל (as the Master

[g] *Patiamini Apologiam meam, quam post publicatas revelationes* Cotteri, Drabicii, &c. *& mox contra omnem spem eventus spei nostra contrarios, amicorũ trepidatio texere coegerat.* J. Comen. in Præfat. ad Histor. Revelat.

[h] Isai. 44. 25.

Vid. Pocock. Port. Mos. p. 23.

Master to whom we have had such frequent recourse, well notes) *not the greater nor lesser part*, substance or circumstance, ever fell to the ground. And He tells us, those words of *Jeremiah*, [k] *The Prophet that hath a Dream, let him tell a Dream; and he that hath my Word, let him speak my Word faithfully; what is the chaff to the wheat?* their Doctors used to gloss thus; *Prophecy is a thing pure without the allay of any falshood mixed with it, like wheat cleansed from the chaff; but Dreams and other vulgar Indications have a lie always intermixed, and are like chaff in which there are but some few grains of wheat.* God is careful to accomplish the very criticisms and circumstances of his Predictions, because this gives the greatest assurance of their Divine Author. For the substance of Events may possibly be thought Object great enough for the Eye of humane Prudence to see afar off, but circumstances are easily presumed too little for our heavy Eyes to discern at any great removes.

k Jer. 23. 28.

If any Person better seen in the Writings of Modern Prophets, than I have any ambition to be thought to be, is able to instance a Prophecy of any longer date, whose words did exactly touch the Event foretold both in the substance and circumstance thereof; yet he shall alway observe his Prophet to have

have failed in some one, nay in very many other instances, if any thing talkative (as it is well the prophetick humor in such persons disposeth them to be) which is a sufficient assurance that he foretold nothing by a divine suggestion. Thus *Savonarola* (a *Dominican*) foretold long before, that *Charls* the eighth of *France* should come into *Italy* with a great Army, which came to pass: But withal, *that God had revealed to him that the State Ecclesiastick should be reformed by force of Arms: which* (saith the Historian) *hath not yet* (nor yet) *happened, but at that time was very likely to have been effected.* The Examples of this kind are too great for Arithmetick.

[1] *Ad hæc divinitus sibi patefactū esse dicebat oportere statum Ecclesiasticum per vim armorum reformari. Nondum quidem istud accidit, sed tunc temporis propè erat ut fieret.* Phil. Comines de bel. Neap. l. 7. p. mi. 96.

The two branches of this Consideration I find struck at by a double Objection, which I shall endeavor to secure them from. It is opposed to the first, That very many of these Modern Prophecies have been very punctually accomplish'd, though unseal'd by any divine Sign attending the delivery of them. *In* Answer hereunto, I return, (1.) *Mere prudential Conjectures after the Event often commence accomplish'd Prophecies in vulgar Opinion:* the common sort of people being apt to invest every thing that lies out of the road of their thoughts and observations with the Opinion of some Divinity lodged in it. Thus that famous

Speech

Speech of *Seneca* the Tragædian,

-----Venient annis
Secula seris, quibus Oceanus
Vincula rerum laxet, & ingens
Pateat Tellus, Typhisque novos
Detegat orbes; nec sit terris
Ultima Thule,-----

hath been concluded *the voice of God*, a prophetick instinct referring to the discovery of *America* in these latter Ages, which was indeed but *the voice of a Man*, a rational conjecture proceeding upon a probable perswasion, that so great a part of the Globe of the Earth was not all Sea, and so would in time be found. [m] *Cardan* having related several very strange Predictions of his, exactly fulfilled, adds, *Neither would I have any one think these to have been far fetch'd, either from the Devil or the Stars; but onely from the Oracle of* Aristotle, *who gives true Divination onely to prudent Persons.* This prudential Divination, which is but the foresight of the effect in the promises of some parturient Causes, is familiar with wise and observant men. For *a wise-man's heart will tell him more then seven watchmen that are upon a tower*, whose office it is to see men and things at distance. Prudence is but the contraction of Providence in the *name*, and the commendable [n] image of it in the *nature* thereof. (2.) *Many of these accomplishments were*

[m] Nec velim quenquam opinari quod haec longius petita sint, aut ex Daemone aut ex astris, sed ex Aristotelis Oraculo, solum animinquit ille, prudentum ac sapientum veram esse Divinationem. Card. de vit. propr. c. 42.

[n] Ὁ Θεὸς αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς σώμασι μέτρον, ὁ δὲ νοῦν εἰκόνα τὴν ἐκείνου. Synes. de Reg.

were rather lucky hits then divine foresights. These Prophets are many, and perpetually shooting of their bolts, and it were hard if they did not sometimes hit the mark, especially when standing so near as sometimes they do before they let fly (foretelling things, removed by no great distance of time.) Such a lucky cast was that singular foresight of *Tully*, reflected upon by o himself as a kind of divine Testimony to the sincerity of his intentions in reference to the Commonwealth. And the fortunate Speech of that Ancient *Grecian* Philosopher *Lucanus Ocellus*, p Greece *hath been often barbarous heretofore, and so shall be again* in after Ages, some would be ready now to prefer to the repute of a Prophecy, which was but a loose & conjectural Conclusion built upon an observation that Bodies Politick, as well as Natural, have their decays and years of dotage, and that the deepest dye of any worldly felicity would in time languish and change color. (3.) *A great part of these Prophecies are meer impostures, and contrived after the Event, by some idle heads.* For it is seldom that we hear of them, till the matters related in them are past; and then these Prophets, having the Event before them to take measure of, make their Prophecy to fit it exactly, both in substance and circumstance, that so there might be the less suspi-

o *Praclara conscientia, sustentor, cum cogito me de Rep. aut meruisse optimè cum posuerim, aut certe nunquã nisi divinè cogitasse, eáq; ipsa tempestate eversam esse Remp. quam ego 14 annis ante prospexerim.* Epist. l. 10. 3.

p Πολλάκις ἡ γέγονε ἡ ἔσται βάρβαρα τὰ Ἑλλάς. Lucan. Occ. περὶ τ. Παντ. κ. γ.

cion that they saw things to come (like the man but half cured of his blindness) onely in rude generals, and by the heavy Eye of humane prudence. Whereas there cannot be a greater assurance of sophistry in a Prediction, then an over-busie and critical enumeration of Events therein. For Prophecies should deliver the general substance or some one great circumstance of an Event so distinctly that they be not thought loose conjectures, but as to the circumstances of less remark, they should be wholy silent, that they be not suspected onely disguized Histories when once they are fulfilled. For this Reason perhaps the Divine Prophecies come forth (like the pillar in the Wilderness) partly cloud and partly fire, cloudy and obscure as to the lesser circumstances, but bright and clear enough as to the substance of Events foretold. Whereas these Vulgar Prophecies either stay in loose Generals, and like a sack are so contrived that they may be clapt upon any person, but perfectly fit none; or else are most industriously particular and scarce omit a circumstance. Thus the pretended [q] *Sibylline* Oracles tell our Saviors very name *Jesus*; and whereas the Prophet onely foretels, *A Virgin shall conceive*, they add, *The Virgin Mary shall conceive*, and the like. For so it is usual for such Apes of Prophecy to become ridiculous by an over-acted imitation,

[q] *V. Lib. 8. Orac. Sibyl.*

imitation. (4.) *Many of these Vulgar Prophecies owe their successes, in all probability, to diabolical efficiency.* The Devil first excites such Images in the Fancies of these Prophets, as may probably determine them to foretel many things, which he conceives most likely to fall within his sphere of activity, and then he accomplisheth as many as he can, though with no more of true foresight then that man hath that should think fit, when he knows them, to fulfil many of his Neighbors Dreams. And he is the more ready to interpose his power in this business, because when men shall see their Prophecies or Dreams, of future contingencies especially, thus strangely issued, they will stroke their heads presently, and make no doubt of their near approaches to the prophetick grace; and whilest other men are detained in an idle attendance to such shining vanities, they are ἐζωγρημένοι, *taken alive* by this Fowler in his net. And this Consideration may probably resolve us why some of these Prophecies so strangely hit, and others miss; *viz.* because the Devil fulfils as many of them as fall within his compass, and those which his confined power extends not to accomplish necessarily fall to the ground. (5.) *Several of these Prophecies are delivered in words so loose and unconfined both as to sense and time, that it were a great wonder,* r 2 Tim. 2. 26.

if amidst the vast varieties of Providence they appeared not fulfilled in some Event and Time or other. Thus it was noted of old of the true [s] *Sibylline* Oracles, that they were composed in such dark and undetermined expressions, that Fancy might make them, like a Picture, look to any Person, any Event whatsoever. All this offers us some account of those successes which these Propheticall Essays have sometimes been followed with; and withal conclude the great necessity of some divine Sign to attest the Prophet or Prophecy, that so it may be known that the Event was not a chance, a prudential foresight, or diabolical delusion, but a true prophetical accomplishment.

To the second branch of the present Argument it is opposed, that many of God's Prophecies were never fulfilled. *If all were* (saith [t] *Comenius*) *whence was it that the Prophets became the publick scorn, the People* sarcastically *demanding, Where is the Word of the Lord? Let it come now, Jerem.*17.15. To this Objection (though indeed it merit rather a Censure then an Answer) I return, That Scripture [u] abundantly assures us, that never one word which God spake fell to the ground: and therefore perhaps the *LXX* chose to render *Urim* and *Thummim* by δήλωσις and ἀλήθεια, *Manifestation* and *Truth*, because by these two especially were God's Oracles

[s] *Callidè, qui illa* Oracula *composuit, perfecit, ut quodcunq; accidisset, prædictum videretur, hominū & temporum definitione sublatâ adhibuit etiā latebram obscuritatis, ut iidem versus aliâs in aliam rem posse accommodari viderentur.* Tul. de Div. l. 2.

[t] *Si omnia, Unde igitur fuit, quòd* Israelitici *etiam Prophetæ à suis ludibria passi, quæritantibus,* Ubi est verbum, *&c. Præfat. in Hist. Revel.* p. 11.

[u] *See* Num. 23. 19. Isai. 34. 16. Josh. 23. 14. 1 Sam. 3. 19. Isai. 14. 24. Mat. 5. 18. Hab. 2. 3.

Oracles distinguish'd from the Devil's: God's being eminent for perspicuity and Truth, and the Devil's for obscurity and falshood. God hath given us this character to know a false Prophet by, [w] *When a Prophet speaketh in the Name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, this is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the Prophet hath spoken it presumptuously*; and therefore we may rest assured, that God, if he [x] *speak with his mouth, will fulfil with his hand.* True indeed, we read of some divine Prophecies of great Blessings and Judgments not literally fulfilled: But these (as God himself [y] tells us) though absolute in their terms, yet were always conditional in their interpretation; and therefore when ever they were not fulfilled in terms, there was some great sin or repentance interposing which gave a very rational account thereof to the minds of men. But all divine Prophecy, absolute both in its terms and intent, constantly was fulfilled. Now when the Prophecy was such, the People might understand by such Signs as these, * If the Prophecy were sealed with the Oath of God, or some equivalent asseveration: * If it were delivered as a Sign of the truth of the Prophet's Mission, or of some other more considerable Prediction: * If the Prediction were delivered in terms of the Preter-tense;

[w] Deut. 18, 22.

[x] 1 Kin. 8, 15.

[y] Jer. 18. 7, 8, 9

1 Sam. 15. 29.

* If it were often repeated by the ſame or more Prophets: * If it were a Prediction of
1 King. 15. 29. ſome Evil againſt things or perſons evidently devoted to deſtruction: * If the things foretold were of an indifferent nature, not greatly good or evil, and many ſuch like. Theſe I ſay conſtantly came to paſs: and therefore to thoſe words of the people (which thought a Prophecy delay'd, forgotten) I oppoſe the words of God appealing to the Experience of theſe very People: *My Words*
Zech. 1. 6. *and my Statutes which I commanded my ſervants the Prophets, did they not take hold of your Fathers?* to which the People, in a more ſerious temper, return; *Like as the Lord of Hoſts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, ſo hath he done unto us.*

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Many Modern Prophecies proved to arise from Melancholy.

The strong Opinion of Inspiration in Modern Prophets, proved an effect of the power of Melancholy. Their pretended Visions attributed to the same cause. The Visions of melancholy men, why many, and to them very evident. Their vehement incitations to Prophecy proved also a symptome of Melancholy. How this humor becomes effectual thus to excite to Prophecy. Dying men, why often, in appearance, Prophetical. A natural account of the Prophetical Essays of the Pythia. Plutarch's Philosophical account of some ceasing Oracles justified. The ardors in these Prophets and the Sibyls, natural. The delusions of Melancholy assisted usually by the cooperation of the Devil.

A Fifth Consideration to reprehend the Faith of these Prophecies, is this; *Those* popular *Wonders* which shew *forth themselves in the Authors of them, plainly appear but the natural Effects of Melancholy tinctured with Religion.* This will appear more clearly if we be a little particular: (1.) *That invincible confidence* (which inchants the vulgar) *of their being divinely inspired.* It is ordinary with such such men to take to themselves the titles of *the* [b] *Trump of God, the last Prophet,* [c] *the Word and Power of God,* and the like; and that with a plerophory that shall bear it self against the strongest Reasons, contrary Events of

Consid. 5.

[b] *Placuit Deo per me tanquã ultimam suam Tubam Nationibus, &c.* Drabic. Revel. Div. Epit. p. 16

[c] Ῥῆμα ἐμὶ καὶ πνεῦμα καὶ δύναμις. *uti Maximilli Montani Prophetis.* apud Euf. l. 5. c. 15.

of things, yea ſometimes the greateſt bodily ſeverities that can be uſed to diſcompoſe their Dreams. Now as the *Heathens* holding σφαῖραν ἱερὸν, *that the brain was ſacred*, and the ſeat of ſome Deity, when any one neezed they would venerate the noiſe as a kind of expreſſion of the Deity inſhrined in the head; thus theſe men being ſtrongly poſſeſt by this conceit, that they are *Godded with God*, and that the *Holy Ghoſt* is lodged in their heads, not a fancy can riſe up therein but it is received with as ſacred Opinions as a Papiſt doth the regs and reliques of his Saint; not a cloudy expreſſion drops from them but it is chriſtned [d] a *depth* and a great myſtery, their ear cannot tingle but God is thought to whiſper into it, and the men cannot dream at the common rate of other mortals.

[d] Rev. 2.24.

Whereas all theſe imaginations are but the iſſues of that impoſtrous humor when it paſſeth into a diſeaſe. A Melancholy Fancy is a kind of *Incubus* and *Succubus* to it ſelf, ſerving to beget and to conceive any odd crotchet, and that with ſo much ſtrength, that it appears before the mind in the certainty of ſight or taſt. And it is ſo uſual for this black humor to bewitch the mind into ſome one wild and extravagant conceit, while it appears ſound and untouch'd in all its other judgments, that the *Greek Phyſician*

Physician hath defin'd it, e *A solemn sadness and seriousness about some one* odd *Fancy without a feaver.* Now look as the images which appears before our Minds in a dream, ow their general odness of composure to the power of Fancy over reason in our sleep, but their more particular figures usually to the occasions of the day before: thus the conceits of Melancholy (the dreams of waking men) ow their general wildness and fondness, to the undue figuration of the brain or Spirits by this anomalous humor, but their particular kinds to those mutable occasions of common life, the head is most accustomed to receive impressions from. Men of a more contemplative *Genius*, conceit themselves inspired with some rare mysteries in Nature, with the Cabbalistick sense of Scripture, with the understanding of the hidden analogies between the sensible and intelligible, and the greater and lesser world, with the Art to cure all the natural leprosies of mettals, and the like: Men whose course of life determines their thoughts more upon civil affairs this humor possesseth with the opinion of their being designed Popes or Princes, or some Restorers of the publick liberty. And persons of a more devotional complexion talk much of Visions, raptures, converse with Angels and prophecie, and are apt to fall down before

e Ἔστι δὲ δυμία ὅλη μιὴ φαντασία, ἀνδ. τι πυρετῶ. Aret. cappad. l. 1. c. 5.

fore every idol of their busy fancy, as if some Deity were lodged in it. Thus this giddy humor moves every man (as [f] *Plutarch* saith the Divinatory Enthusiasm doth) *κατ' ὁ πέφυκεν, according as he is naturally disposed and inclined.*

[f] Plut. περὶ τῆς μὴ χρᾶν &c.

How the humors of the body arive at an ability thus to impregnate the mind with conceits wild and monstrous beyond the Varieties of *Africa*, is an enquiry not pertinent here; but to question that so they can, is to speak our selves strangers to all the stories of *Hypocondriacks*, books and discourses abound withall; and that 'tis nothing but the enormous power of a disturbed imagination that bears down these persons into a belief of divine visions, voices and illapse, sappears sufficiently in that they usually commence Prophets *per saltum*, and before they are tolerably qualified with knowledg or piety, they become inspired; and that though heaven and earth refute their predictions once and again, an *heart deceived* by the fulness and importunity of the Impression, *hath so turned them aside*, that they cannot attend; and therefore are no more awakened out of their prophetick dreams by any contrary events, then the begger out of his dreams of greatness and honor by the rags he wears and the dunghill he sleeps on. An example of which grossness

groſſneſs and non-attendance we have in *Drabicius* (a *German* Prophet, of whom ſo much written and diſcourſt of late) who though he ſaw his predictions clearly refuted by events, and told thereof at one ear by his Friends and at both ears by his enemies, yet was ſo * ἐνυπνιαζόμενος carried away by the power of his prophetick dreams as to ſecure himſelf in his fond opinion of Inſpiration by returning, [g] *Annon vox Dei eſt qua dicit*, &c. Is it not the voice of God which [h] ſaith, *God doth nothing but he reveals his ſecrets to his ſervants, and that in the later daies he will pour out his Spirit upon all fleſh, and young men ſhall ſee Viſions and old men dream dreams:* Scriptures which any pretender to prophecy might have cited in his vindication, as well as he.

* Jud. *ver.* 8.

g Hiſt. Revel. p. 248.

h Amos 3. 7. Joel. 2. 28.

2. *Thoſe wonderful Viſions repreſented to their minds in ſome Ecſtacy or profound ſleep.* At ſuch a time ſome very frightful or lovely images ſhew themſelves upon the Scene of Fancy, and thoſe (as dreams take figure from the occaſions of the day) generally made after the likeneſs of thoſe Apocalyptical or other Prophetick Viſions, with which the minds of ſuch perſons when awake are commonly entertained and deeply ſealed. Now theſe *Viſa*, by the great ſingularity of their form, vivacity of repreſentation

ſentation, and prophetical analogy, do ſo wonderfully affect and poſſeſs the Mind, and inchant it with ſuch huge fears or joys, that the Melancholy perſon doubts not to receive them with the faith and affection of Divine diſcoveries. And therefore if the more terrible aſpect of the images repreſented to his mind, proclaim them the proper emblems of ſome great evils, he preſently concludes that God, who tenders his ſervants with the care and affection a Mother doth her ſucking child, would willingly have them forewarned, that ſo they might by repentance, prayers or prudence avert the impendent evil from themſelves, or fortifie their minds with Chriſtian patience to receive its coming. But if their more delightful form prefer them the types of ſome joyful Event, as is the freedom of the Church laboring under ſome heavy oppreſſion, the propagation of the Goſpel, and the enlargement of Chriſts Kingdom; they haſtily catch at the welcome token, and that is thought foretold therein which themſelves have the greateſt paſſion for. And they are the more ſoft and eaſy to ſuch prophetical conceits, becauſe thoſe paſſions of *Fear* and *Hope*, ſo intimate to our Natures, and which generally govern the Perſwaſions even of wiſer men, are ſo regnant in their Souls made ſo impreſſive by Melancholy

lancholy and ſome tinctures of Religion.

Now theſe pretended Viſions, which conciliate Veneration to theſe Prophets with ruder perſons, will appear much beneath our wonder, if it be conſidered that Melancholy when it exceeds its juſt proportions, is very productive of them. This the Philoſopher hath noted, [i] *Men that are of a talkative and melancholy temper ſee any kind of Viſions.* And this, eſpecially becauſe they have ſo deep a reſentment of the moſt affecting objects, whoſe images therefore recur to the fancy when they are aſleep, in moſt diſtinct and lively figures. Now the Viſions of ſuch men are the more evident and lively, becauſe of the dryneſs of their temper (as [l] *Gallen* gives the reaſon) whereby there are no ſuch myſts and vapors riſing up to confound and obſcure them, which are the cauſe why the night-Viſions of perſons full fed, or overcome with wine, are ſo confuſed and leave ſuch languiſhing impreſſions upon their waking Fancies. Theſe images being ſo clear and active, the mind takes them (as the birds did thoſe on the tables of *Apelles*) for true and real things; and as when we ſuddainly awake out of ſome very affecting dream, the figures which its clearneſs and ſtrength of impreſſion made upon the Fancy, cannot

[i] Ὅσων ἂν ἡ φύσις λαλιᾶ δὲ καὶ μελαγχολικὴ πανταδαπὰς ὄψεις ὁρῶσι. Ariſt. de div. per inſomn. c. 2

[l] *Melancholicis, propter ſiccitatem, viſa in ſomnis prorſus evidentia apparent.* Comment. in Hippocrat. de Humor. l. 2.

not presently be blotted out, but we continue for a time to entertain it with the affections of a great reality; thus (but by a more obstinate delusion) are the persons we now speak of imposed upon by an unruly Fancy. For when deep sleep hath fallen upon them, and cut the Soul off from all converse with things sensible, it is wholy immerst in the view of those images which walk upon the stage of Imagination, with which the common sense is as inwardly moved, as if excited by some object from abroad; and therefore it receives them with the Opinion of their being not phantastical but real and divine appearances. As for those Visions these Prophets speak of when they are awake, they may arise from those [m] vehement and intense thoughts, which represent some great Objects to them in very distinct and affecting *Ideas*; with which the mind is so fully possest and sealed, as not much to attend to the circumstance of the real presence thereof; and therefore easily perswades it self, that object stood before it of which it had so lively a perception, and with which it was so inwardly touched and affected. Besides, nothing so familiar as for men of very impressive phancies and timerous dispositions to have a continual scene of strange sights presented before them. The [n] Philosopher noted

[m] V. Joh. de Guevar. de Inter. Sens. l. 3. q. 30.

[n] Ἐνίοις τῶν νεωτέρων καὶ πάμπαν διαβλέπουσιν, ἐὰν ἡσυχάσῃς, φαίνεται εἴδωλα πολλὰ, κενεμβύα, ὡς ἐγκαταλύπτεσθαι πολλάκις φοβερώτατα. De Insom. c. 3.

ted long ago, that *to persons young and that look intensly, if it be dark, there appear many strange images moving to and fro, so that in a great fear they hide themselves in the bed-clothes.* Whereas in such sights the Fancy is both Scene and Spectator to it self. This shews that 'tis *possible* that these pretended Visions may be but the inchantments of Melancholy. But he that considers that Divine Visions were vouchsaft as rarely and upon as concerning occasions as Miracles will believe it *probable* that they are no other. Did God dispense the favors of these divine visits to the Patriarchs and Prophets so sparingly of old, and are they become now as familiar to some men as dreams to others? *Familiars*, hath been the title of bad spirits but never of good.

3. *Their vehement incitations to prophecy.* They feel the new images of things or persons striking with great strength and evidence upon their Fancies, and themselves quickened by a very hot and active principle, whose powers they cannot easily stand against, to *make the Vision plain*, and to declare to others what conceits and passions it comes attended with: and therefore they conceive that *the word of the Lord is as a fire shut up in their bones*, and that they are ἐν πνεύματι, wholy possest by some divine power which they cannot bear themselves against,

against, nay indeed *should not*, for who are they that should *withstand God?* Whereas all these things are but the subtil fallacies which the fumes of hypochondriacal Melancholy, when grown hot and fiery, put upon the Fancy, being as apt to intoxicate the brain, and make it impressive to as odd conceits, as the active vapors of lusty wine. These vapors being carried by the brain with a mighty force, confound the natural figurations thereof and excite some new Idols therein, which by the singularity of their appearance, and importunity of occurrence, cannot but create affections correspondent to them [u] which together with those firy Spirits, will put men upon great freedom of speech (that which a very affecting dream will sometimes do) to deliver themselves of those strange thoughts which upon such occasions will rise up within them. Now 'tis no wonder at all (as the [w] *Philosopher* saith) if such kind of men being thus *incited to speak very much and of very various things* (the Scenes of Fancy being so often shifted by these giddy vapors) *that they have some fortunate hits*, and true divinations.

That 'tis only the forrein heat of these Vapors which excites these predictions, appears probable in that every [x] flatuous ca-

[u] Job 32. 18, 19, 20.

[w] Διὰ τὸ πολλὰ καὶ παντοδαπὰ κινεῖσθαι, ὅπ τυγχάνουσιν ὁμοίοις διαφήμασιν ὁμπτυχεῖς ὄντες. De Divin. per Insomn. c. 2.

[x] *Cerebri flatuosa calefactio, undecunque proveniat, sub certa temperie constituta incitat ad mira eloquenda, per cantilenas, hominemq; supra se penè constituit.* Christ. à castro. de Vaticin. l. 1. c. 21.

lefaction

lefaction of the brain whence ſoever it ariſe, is apt to make a man ecſtatical, to expreſs it ſelf in wonderful ſpeeches, and thoſe often prophetical. The vapors of wine meeting with ſome conſtitutions, have ſtrangely ap'd an Enthuſiaſm; as appears from thoſe Verſes of the *y Poet*, upon occaſion of the truly *Fovial* doings upon ſome of their idolatrous Feſtivals.

y Ovid. Faſtor. l. 3.

Invenies illic qui Neſtoris ebibat annos
Quæ ſit per calices facta Sibylla ſuos.

There ſhall you find old men turn'd boies by wine,
Young Maids old Sibyls, who by th' cup divine.

Accordingly in ſome z Oracular places, the Diviners uſed to excite the prophetick faculty (as they thought) by a liberal doſe of wine or ſome water which had a kind of inebriating property: ſuch hot and unwieldy vapors (though excited by a feaver) have made dying men ſo famous, for their prophetical Eſſays, in all Ages and Nations: though they have been vainly thought (as all Extraordinaries, eſpecially about the minds of men uſually are) of a more divine extraction. And that prophetick fit which ſeiz'd the *Pythia* placed over ſome hollow cavern of the Earth, was owing to the ſubtil

z *In hoc advto, Liberi, vaticinaturi, plurimo mero ſumpto, uti apud* Clarium *aqua epota eſſantur Oracula.* Macrob. Saturn. l. 1. c. 18. V. If. Voſ. De Idolat. l. 2. p. 685.

a Sibylla ſuſcipiebat Deum per Spiritum quendã tenuem igneumque qui erumpebat ex ore antri, &c. De Myſt. Egypt. m. p. 66.

b Alibi fatidici ſpecus, quorum exhalatione temulenti, futura præcinunt, ut Delphis, &c. Plin. Nat. Hiſt. l. 2. p. 93.

c Strab. Geog. l. 9.

d To this purpoſe Prudentius: Perdidit inſanos mundax Dodona Vapores. In Apoth. tit. cont. Jud.

e Vid. Molin. Vat. l. 3. c. 14.

tã and fiery ſpirit (as a *Iamblicus* calls it) thence aſcending her tender body and b intoxicating of her, though in ſomewhat a more violent maner then wine would have done (in ſo much as ſometimes ſhe dyed in the fit) and ſealing her Fancy (already ſtrongly poſſeſt with the extraordinary Sacredneſs of her place and office) with wild conceits which ſhe delivered in as wild a maner: and this account of the pretended inſpiration of the *Pythia* is favored by c *Strabo*, telling us that ſhe expected the Oracular power being placed over the narrow mouth of the Sacred cavern, and that ἀναφέρεσθαι ἐκ αὐτοῦ πνεῦμα ἐνθουσιαστικὸν, from thence was carried forth an Enthuſiaſtick d vapor or ſpirit, which excited the latent diſpoſition to prophecy in her ſoul, as the wind doth the Muſical power of ſome well-tuned Organ. And therefore I think *Plutarch*, not ſo much out, as commonly thought in his Treatiſe, περὶ τῶν ἐκλελοιπότων χρηστηρίων, *concerning the ceaſing Oracles*, (for ſo it ſhould be rendered, e all not being ſilenced in his time, nor long after) when attributing their Silence in ſome formerly famous places, to the languiſhing of that Enthuſiaſtick Vapor which inſpired the Propheteſs, the caverns (as he conceives) lying continually open being apt (like expoſed liquors) to loſe Spirits, and to decay in their ancient

cient verses. This imposture the Devil abused the world withal, till the light of the Gospel and Philosophy made the fallacy notorious.

To return. As for that mighty *ardor* whereby they are carried forth to deliver themselves, it is perfectly a natural thing, being but the impatience of that hot and nimble vapor of fermented Melancholy. The *Sibyls* of old (which [f] *Aristotle* rightly judgeth inspired only by this fiery Spirit) used [g] often to mention those divine fires they felt themselves (as they thought) quickned and excited by; which were only the Symptomes of this exalted humor of which the same Philosopher notes [illegible], &c. it becomes even like boyling water when once sufficiently heated. And that they are only these hot and restless Spirits arising out of the caverns of the body (much of temper with those in the *Pythia*) which inspire them, appears in that we generally find them [illegible] (as [h] *Eusebius* stiles the Preachers, of *Montanus* his doctrine) *Prophets that talk without measure.* Their books and discourses are so voluminous as if they feared nothing more then the poor title of *Minor Prophets*: witness the mighty bulk to which the Revelations of S. *Brigid*, *Drabitius* and others swell into. We may

[f] *Arist. Probl.* sec. 30.

[g] *Sibyllæ cerebro se dicunt ardere, torrente vi magna flammarum.* Ammian. Mar. cel. l. 21. sub init. ub. sup.

[h] *Euseb. hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 15.*

Joh. 10. 20.

ever have Prophecies from theſe perſons very good cheap. Whereas when the Spirit of wiſdom incited the holy men of old, their words were weighed in a balance, their diſcourſes conſequent, their ſeaſons of Prophecy few and choſen, and their Doctrine precious as the gold of *Ophir*.

While I thus ſalve the ſtrange *Phænomena* about theſe Vulgar Prophets by the powers of Melancholy; I intend not to deny but that the Devil (who works by darkneſs as God by light) may ſometimes interpoſe, and where he finds the Mind fitted by this diſtemper for him to work upon, may (to make the impoſture more fine and ſubtil) act it to ſome expreſſions beyond the bare capacities of this jugling humor, as to ſpeak languages, to tell ſome things at diſtance, as the certain coming of ſuch a friend or Epileptick fit, upon ſuch a day or hour (which the *German* Propheteſs *Chriſtina* often did.) It ſeems to have been the received opinion of the Ancient *Jews* that an high Melancholy or diſtraction was attended alway with an evil Spirit, whence that ſpeech of theirs concerning our Savior. * *He hath a Devil and is mad*, upon which Text Mr *Mead* tells us that they uſed to ſtile their *Melancholici* and *Maniaci* בעלי שרים or Δαιμονιζόμενοι. And according to the ſtrain of all

* Joh. 10. 20.

all the Jewiſh Scholiaſts (as [i] Maſter *Smith* informs us) by *the Evil Spirit* of *Saul* nothing elſe is meant but a *Melancholy kind of Madneſs* which made him Prophecy or ſpeak diſtractedly and inconſiſtently: and when the gentle aires and motions of * Muſick had diſſipated theſe Melancholy vapors *the Evil Spirit departed* with them.

[i] *Diſc. of Prophec.* p. 250.

* 1 Sam. 16. 23.

CHAP. VII.

Probable Arguments to prove all divine Prophecy now ceaſt.

The Ceſſation of Prophecy now, not abſolutely aſſerted, and why. Five reaſons alledged to prove its ceſſation, probable. A promiſe of Prophecy to any Age, the greateſt ſecurity that it is not impoſed upon by Pretenders to it. No Promiſe of Prophecy made to the ends of the World. The ſeveral ends Prophecy ſerved to under the times of the Old *and* New Teſtament: *proved unſerviceable to any ſuch ends now. Why Prophecy not given now to comfort good men in affliction. Why it expired in the* Jewiſh *Church ſo long before our Saviors coming. Several reaſons alledged againſt the received Opinion of a* Bath Kol *ſucceeding to Prophecy under the ſecond Temple. The Original of that ſpeech of* Strabo, *that Moſes advanced himſelf by the promiſe of a Religion without Sacrifice or Prophecy, gueſt at. Such a Religion proved the felicity of this New Diſpenſation.*

Conſid. 6. THE laſt Conſideration which I ſhall ſuperadd to diſparage the faith of theſe Vulgar Prophecies is this. *It ſeems highly probable that the true Prophetick Spirit is now gone up, and that all divine Revelations, as well of future Events as new Doctrines, are wholy ceaſt in the Church of God.* I ſhall not be poſitive in this Aſſertion, becauſe I find a Synod convened in *Germany*, Anno 1633. where the Divines being moved by ſome zealous perſons to declare themſelves againſt all pretended Revelations and Prophecies, now that God had

ſo

so eminently refuted the famous Visions of *Cotterus* and *Christina Poniatovia* in the unexpected deaths of *Gustavus* of *Sweden* and *Frederick* of *Bohemia*, prophecyed of by them, as the Saviors and Restorers of the *German* Protestants; They declined it, adding, that [k] *yet no Church, or Consistory or University had altogether rejected or condemned, such kind of new Prophecies, and why would we be the First?* Certainly then 'twill very ill become my privacy and obscurity to take the Chair and pronounce confidently that folly is with them all, and that there is nothing of Divine Prophecy now in the world besides the vain noise and affectation thereof. I shall only crave the freedom to tender those reasons which make it seem probable to my self that there are no such extraordinary visits of the Divine Spirit now to be found in the world. Whereof the first is this:

k *Nondum ullam Ecclesiam, aut Consistorium, vel Academiam, novas id genus prophetias penitus rejeciisse, aut condemnasse: nos cur primi esse vellemus?* Hist Revel. per J. A. C. p. 131

1. *God hath by no Promise encouraged our Expectation of any such prophetick inspiration in these latter Ages of the World.* When ever God gave Prophecy to his Church, as it usually came attended with some other eminent gifts, whereby men might understand it was an Age of Extraordinaries; so it was alway ushered by some promise thereof. God gave Prophecy to the Church of the Old Testament, and to Reas. 1.

the Times wherein our Savior was first manifested and preached to the world (stiled the [l] *last daies*, being the expiring times of the Jewish Oeconomie) and there was notice given thereof by a fore-running Promise delivered by [m] *Moses* and *Joel*. God would not have so great a gift, that comes forth (as all extraordinary ones do) upon some errand of im ort, to steal into the world; and men be in danger of losing the benefit thereof, while destitute of any thing to resolve them whether there be any רוח חקרש, *Holy Ghost* thus given yea or no. Besides, where we have no special promise, we have no ground at all of expectation or trust, and if we trust our Faith with any pretended Prophecy and Revelation though presented with all the probable appearances of truth, before we know whether God hath made promise of any such matter now, we do but tempt God, and expect he should charge himself with us while we walk *in præcipitiis*, in waies wherein he never told us we should meet him. A Promise from God in this matter, is (I think) one of the most necessary securities to our faith. There were under the times of the Old Testament undoubtedly, as many persons inspired only by the Spirit of heated Melancholy, and more by a much worse, then now there are; but that which was the great security to the minds

[l] Act. 2. 17.

[m] Deut. 18. Joel. 2. 32.

minds of good men then, that they were not cheated by any of the gilded Prophecies then current among them, was, that God had made them a Promiſe to ſend them Prophets from time to time to reſolve them in all matters relating to this life as well as the other: and therefore they might preſume the Providence of God would be more eſpecially watchful to preſerve them (if not greatly wanting to themſelves) from being fatally abuſed while expecting inſtruction by a Prophecy, a way of divine Sanction in thoſe times. In confidence eſpecially of this divine ſecurity, we find even [n] Princes proceeding without ſcruple to action, and in matters of very great moment, upon the bare word of a Perſon that pretended to ſpeak from God, though without any Sign (that we read of) given to ſeal his Miſſion from God upon that occaſion; whereas now a Prince would but fall the Martyr of his own credulity, if truſting his affairs with the moſt importunate voices of a pretending Prophet againſt ſober Reaſons of State, when there appears neither divine Sign, nor promiſe of Prophecy, to warrant his Faith.

[n] *See* 2 King. 9.11,12,13. 2 Chro. 20.14, 15,16,17,18. 2 Chro. 25.7, 8,9,10.

It is readily acknowledged, that none of God's true Prophets but came atteſted at one time or other with ſome divine Signs; but yet he that ſhall conſider that theſe

were

were not vouchsafed to bear testimony to each particular message which they delivered as from God, and that many Signs were given by them (as the causing of iron to swim, disclosing the secrets of the bedchamber, foretelling the death of some person, and some seeming contingencies) which it is likely fall within the Devil's compass to shew; and that sometimes the Prophets [o] countermanded their own counsels and advices, and that those holy men were no more exempt from the delusions of Melancholy then good men are now; and that Miracles have been so counterfeited by the Arts of Magick, that even wise men have not been able to detect the imposture; must needs grant, that the promise of God to teach men by Prophecy, together with the Prophet his appearing (as the *Jews* speak) אדם הראוי לנבואה *a Man fit for Prophecy*, was generally the firmest ground of trust they had to build the faith of the Divinity of his Signs and Prophecy upon. And therefore I think many Signs might more firmly conclude the divine inspiration of men in those Ages to which Prophecy was promised, then the like can do if tendred by any Pretender to inspiration in our own.

[o] 2 Sam. 7. 3, 4.

Now then, there being not the least air of any promise of Prophecy made to the last Times of the World, we have reason to think

think that the Prophetick Spirit is flown back to Heaven (like *Elijah*) and hath left nothing behind it, but its *mantle*, its garb and dress, which Imposture sometimes walks up and down the World withal. As for that place of Scripture so often alledged by the Modern Enthusiasts, to justifie the Expectation of Prophecy now; *It shall come to pass in the last days that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesie, &c.* it is wholy impertinent, because, as q *Theodoret* notes, it received its evident and literal accomplishment at the day of *Pentecost*. But a greater then *Theodoret* is here, S. *Peter*, who r expresly fixeth the accomplishment of that Prophecy in the liberal effusions of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit upon that great Day: where we may note by the way, that he seems not to understand the place of Prophecy strictly taken (for Prediction) in favor of which alone it is alledged by our Adversaries, but for those other extraordinary gifts of the Spirit there mentioned, and for which *Prophecy* doth often suppose elsewhere in Scripture.

Joel 2.28.

q Τὸ δὲ ἀναφανδὸν καὶ διαῤῥήδην καὶ ἡμέραν ἐπεγκεῖσης τὸ πέρας ἐδέξατο. *Comment. in loc.*

r Act. 2.16,17

2. *All other extraordinary gifts which anciently attended the Prophetick Spirit, are now ceased.* The gifts of healing, of working Miracles, of discerning of Spirits, of divers Tongues, of interpretation of Scripture, have

Resp. 2.

1 Cor. 12.10.

have all expired with their occasion; and why should we imagine that *Prophecy* (numbred with them) survives them all? a gift of which I am sure the World hath incomparably less need then of any of the rest! Those other gifts of the Spirit could ease the pains, enlighten the Eyes, resolve the Conscience, *presently* confirm the Faith of men, which a Prophecy could not do: and therefore whereas we find those gifts very familiarly used, and liberally conferred in the first times of the Gospel, yet we meet with this prophetick gift very rarely exerted by our Savior or his Apostles; and some of the Persons who had it (as if they were rarely to be found) are particularly mentioned in the New Testament; *viz. Agabus, Barnabas, Simon Niger, Lucius, Manahen, Silas,* the four Daughters of *Philip,* and some few others. Why then should a Gift, which was of so little name and consideration in compare with the rest, continue in the Church, when all the other (like Scaffolds when the House is built) are taken away, now that *the House of God* is built up, and the Faith confirmed? Certainly the fond affection which some men have for Prophecy, and that strength of face with which others pretend to it, are the things which suborn their Understandings to believe that so acceptable a gift is honored with a longer continuance in

Acts 13. 1.

in the World then the rest of its Brethren. If we consult *Antiquity*, it will appear more likely that this gift alone is faln, there being more frequent mention *therein* of some Miracles wrought in the Name of Christ, but less is said concerning the Prophetical Spirit, especially after the second Century. [r] *V. Mr. Smith Disc. of Prophec. p. 272.*

3. *Prophecy cannot now minister to any of those great ends, to which under the first times of the Old and New Testament it did.* It served under the Old Testament as *a seal of the divine Inspiration of those Scriptures in which it was found*; and was a pregnant assurance to present and future Times, that all those Promises, Precepts, Threatnings, found in conjunction with any accomplish'd Prophecy, were equally of divine Original. To this purpose speaks a [s] *Jewish* Doctor, כי עקר מציאות הנבואה *The fundamental Reason why Prophecy is extant in the Prophets, is onely this, That they may* with the greater authority *exhort men to an observation of the Law, to divine Worship, and to do what is acceptable unto God, and that Man may be perfect with God, not barely that they may declare things to come. This is found in the Prophets but out of a secondary intention, onely to confirm the truth of their inspiration*; and the like reason of Prophecy in Scripture is alledged by [t] *Origen*. Whereas these Vulgar

Reas. 3.

[s] Author *Seph. JK. l. 3. c. 8. ap. Voss. in Pug. Fid. p. 101.*

[t] *Orig. l. 7. cont. Cels. p. 338. Ed. Cantabr.*

Vulgar Prophecies cannot (need not) seal any divine Doctrine or part of Scripture if they should be fulfilled; and therefore have no more real value then the seal in separation from the writing. They tell us perhaps (which no wise man much concerns himself to know) that after such a period of time, such a great Prince shall ascend the Throne, such a famous Event shall fall; and if the Prediction chance to succeed, the Prophet looks big, and the People wonder, and that's all. Moreover, *Prophecy served* (like the *Shechinah* in the Temple) as a [u] *testimony of God's dwelling in and owning of that Church in which it was found.* And accordingly the departing of the Prophetick Spirit from a people, if found elsewhere in the World, was a Sign God had given them a bill of divorce. Thus God at last assured his rejection of the *Jewish* and acknowledgment of the *Gentile* Church, by his taking Prophecy wholy from the one, and giving it at the same time unto the other; that which [w] *Origen* and [x] *Justin Martyr* take frequent notice of in their Disputes against the *Jews* and *Heathens*. Now Prophecy is no more necessary in this Age then Miracles to witness Christs presence with his Church, for she hath had it liberally already; and when it departed, it went not from her to *Jew* or *Turk*, but back to Heaven, leaving behind

u Ecclus. 36. 15. Rev. 19. 10. Luk. 7. 16. Joel 2. 28. Isai. 29. 9, 10.

w *Orig. cont. Cels.* l. 7. p. 337

x *Just. M. Dial. cum Tryp.* p. 211. & 245.

behind it the many virtues of the Spirit, in themselves more undoubted pledges of his favor. And besides, the Christian Church now is crumbled into so many Sects and Forms, that were Prophecy now in the World, men would be apt to receive it as a testimony, not to their Church, but to their Party, (to which purpose the Faction of *Rome* pretends it;) and therefore perhaps Prophecy was to be found in the more united times both of the *Jewish* and *Christian* Church, but went away when they began to distinguish themselves by little Forms and Notions, lest it should seem to witness not to the Truth of God, but humors of Men.

A third Reason assigned by some [y] *Jewish* and *Christian* Writers, why God gave the People of the *Jews* their Oracles and Prophets to give them the knowledg of Futurities, as the success of a Battel, the issue of a Sickness, the condition of other Kingdoms in after-times, &c. is this; *Because else in all likelihood they would have apostatized to the Rites of the Heathen,* who had their Oracles and Diviners [ταῦτα ἀνῃρεῖτο ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν μαντείων καὶ ἐπῳδῶν παρανομίας καὶ ἀσεβείας ἀφορμῆς,] *being prompted thereunto by that natural liquorousness in the minds of men after the knowledg of things to come,* as [z] *Origen* gives the reason; and [a] Scripture seems

y *Deus prophetas mittendo fecit ne opus haberemus Astrologis & divinatoribus & ariolis, quoniam illos consulere possumus &c.* Maimon. apud D. Pocock. P.M. p. 210.

z *Orig. cont. Cels.* l. 1. p. 28. l. 3. p. 113.

a Deut. 18. 14, 15.

to

to assign the same why God gave them Prophecy, even to secure them from all temptation to consult the Oracles of the Heathen, which we find they sometimes did in the [b] silence or [c] absence of the true Prophets. To suppose Prophecy necessary now for this end, to save mens longing after the knowledg of things sealed up in the Counsels of God, is to reproach the World, and to suppose it as liquorish as in its more childish years. Hath not the World out-grown the follies of Auguries, Soothsaying, and profest Diviners long ago, and took up in the resolves of Reason, as the best Oracle to consult in a civil business? and must Christians be thought the onely persons that want a Prophecy to arrest their anxieties in reference to hereafter, and a Prophecy of the certain truth whereof they are as much unresolved as of the issue of affairs? And besides, we shall observe how God sometimes chastised that wanton humor in the *Jews*, by permitting even his own Predictions to be, not seldom, the [d] occasions of very evil Effects.

[b] 1 Sam. 28. 6, 7.
[c] 2 Kin. 1. 2.
[d] 2 King. 8. 13, 14, 15. 2 King. 10. 10. 1 King. 11. 31, 40.

If we proceed to a view of those Ends which *prophecy* serv'd to more specially in the times of the New Testament, it will more clearly appear a great impertinence now. It served then as a divine largess to grace the solemn Inauguration of our Savior to his Mediatory Kingdom:

Kingdom: To assure the acceptance of his person and undertaking with God, who impowered him to confer such great gifts on men. To fore-warn and so to fore-arm young Converts, apt otherwise to be scandalized by the then approaching persecutions for Christ's sake. To seal the reception of the *Gentiles* to the dignity of Sonship, upon whom God had bestowed so great a portion of his Spirit. To prefer the Christian Oeconomy to as sacred regards with men as the *Jewish* had of old, because attended with as liberal an effusion of all extraordinary gifts upon men, as that was. Now it were greatly to under-rate the Reader's time and my own, to prove Prophecy in this Age utterly unnecessary for the service of any such ends as these. So that there appears not any sufficient Reason why we should believe there are any Examples of the Propherick Spirit now extant in the World. Miracles and Prophecies always came forth from God to serve some great occasions, (his Servants never wrought a Miracle, or foretold an Event, as Juglers shew tricks, or Gypsies tell fortunes, onely to cause wonder or to supply discourse:) now these occasions being long ago expired, it is but reasonable to presume that Miracles and Prophecies are fain with them.

To all this perhaps it will be opposed,

That oft-times a very black and tedious night of affliction covers the Servants of God, and that a Prophecy might then serve as the voice of the Cock to bring the joyful news of an approaching morning of deliverance; and that for this end also God often favored his ancient People the *Jews* with Prophecy, even to let them understand when their miseries should determine, lest they *should grow weary and faint in their minds*.

I answer; God hath now supplied good men with higher cordials then a Prophecy to support their sinking spirits with in a day of Evil. He hath confirmed his singular affection to them by the great gift of his Son, he hath told them that *all things shall work together for their* temporal or eternal *good*, that they have *a merciful High-Priest that is touch'd with a feeling of all their infirmities*, that their *light affliction which is but for a moment works for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*; and are not these Considerations better to them then ten Prophecies? Besides, God having now caused the felicities of the other World to stand before us in so full a light, he would have our minds less intangled with sollicitous and unquiet thoughts about the futurities of this. It greatly becomes us now to be more heroical and manly in our hopes and

and resolutions then the *Jews* were, whose temper was as weak, worldly and carnal, as their way of Worship, in compliance with which God encouraged their service by a Covenant made up of worldly Promises, *possession of the Land, the abundance of all things, freedom from evils and bondage.* Now, lest in a tedious affliction they should think God had forgotten his Covenant, and should cast about for some new Master, the Prophets were sent from time to time, to resolve them of the cause and continuance thereof, and (that their patience might not tire) to tell them when their *warfare* should be accomplish'd. Besides, their notices of the felicities of the other World, being so obscure and languishing, might easily render them to greater impatience of the undetermined miseries of this: and therefore when in the times of the second Temple they began to be more clear in the Doctrine of a Resurrection and a life to come, Prophecies of a temporal reference became more rare; as appears from the words of that [e] Psalm, written (it is thought) after the Captivity, where the Church under great pressures thus bemoans her self: *We see not our Signs, there is no more any Prophet, neither is there any among us that knoweth how long;* which words suggest to us a fourth Reason.

[e] Psa. 74. 9.

4. *Prophecy expired in the* Jewish *Church* Reas. 4.

for two or three hundred years before the coming of our Savior. This is a truth of catholick acknowledgment, all *Jewish* and *Christian* Writers confess it but only *Justin Martyr*, who once and again [f] tells *Trypho* the *Jew*, *There never ceased in your Nation, either Prophet or Prince till Jesus Christ was both born and had suffred.* But in this Opinion that excellent Man stands against all the Ancients, and against [g] Canon and [h] *Apocrypha*; and therefore his Testimony not binding. Now if Prophecy ceased then, we have no reason to presume it continues now; for what ever Arguments seem to conclude it necessary to the *Christian* Church now, would with much more strength conclude the neceffity of it to the *Jewish* then: for the Scripture was then more dark and incompleat then now, the People were of a more weak and worldly temper, the Oeconomy more carnal, the Age more accustomed to Prophecies, Men more in danger of being tempted by the absence of Prophecy to consult the Devil's Prophets and Oracles, then so frequent in the World, and a succession of Prophets more fully promised without any limitation of time, then now. Besides, the reason of its cessation seems to have been catholick, *viz.* this: It had now ministred to all those great Ends to which it was thought necessary in the Times

[f] Οὐδέποτε ἐν τῷ γένει ὑμῶν ἐπαύσατο ἢ τε προφήτης ἢ τε ἀρχων, ἐξ ὅτου ἀρχὴν ἔλαβες, μέχρις ἂν ἔλθῃ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ γένηται καὶ ἔπαθεν. *Dialog. cum Tryph. p. 211. & 245.*

[g] Psal. 74. 9.

[h] 1 Mac. 9. 27. 4. 46. 14. 41.

to

to which it was vouchſafed, and therefore (as it is ſaid of *David*) having thus *ſerved its Generation, it fell aſleep*. For though it be true that the ceſſation of Prophecy, as alſo the abſence of the many Glories from the Second Temple which the Firſt had, might ſerve to take men off from looking too intently upon the face of *Moſes*, whoſe ſplendor plainly appeared to be nigh to vaniſhing away, and to quicken their deſires after the more inward and abiding Glories of the *Meſſiah's* Kingdom, and to cauſe them *to expect that New Diſpenſation ſo long promiſed before, which ſhould reſtore the Prophetical Spirit more abundantly*; yet I conceive this to be neither the onely nor the principal Reaſon of that long *interſtitium* of Prophecy in the *Jewiſh* Church. For the Ark, the *Shechinah*, the heavenly fire, and the reſt, were ceremonial appendices, and ſerved the pomp and ſplendor of that Lower Diſpenſation, the utter abſence whereof from the ſecond Temple might ſhew that Oeconomy now waxing old and wearing away; but Prophecy laſted (it is concluded) for at leaſt forty or fifty years under the ſecond Temple, and beſides was given rather for Moral then Ceremonial Ends, which having ſufficiently ſerved, it was beneath the ſacredneſs thereof to be continued to ſerve onely the pomp of the Church,

or the curiosities of Men.

The onely thing now occurring to my thoughts, which may seem to weaken the force of this Reason, is the common Opinion of a בת קול *Filia vocis*, a soft voice heard as descending from Heaven, and was (say the Masters) a lower degree of Prophecy continuing under the Times of the second Temple as a kind of twilight in the *Jewish* Church after the setting of the Sun of Prophecy; and to which the *Targum* is thought sometimes to refer. But as for this prophetick voice, I see no great reason why we should stick to number it with those *Jewish Fables* mentioned *Tit.* 1. 14. and invented (as many more were) to serve the glory of that Nation, and to greaten the favor of Heaven thereunto: there being no two Nations so much remarked for vanity and pride, both in sacred and profane Writings, as the *Jewish* and *Grecian*; and there are none that have so corrupted Histories, and obtruded so many Legends upon the credulity of the World, to inhance the credit and reputation of their own People. Can it easily be thought that God would now speak from Heaven to them who had turned the deaf ear to all his Prophets, and were now so addicted to Magick, Superstition, and all the Examples of Folly and Profaneness: What reason can be

נפקד בת קלא מן שמיא וכו׳ Targum. in Cantic. cap. 1.

be given why God should silence all the Prophets, the Oracles by *Urim*, and by Visions, and honor that obdurate People by any immediate addresses? What higher Grace did God confer upon *Abraham*, upon *Moses*, nay upon his Son, then to speak to them by a Voice from the *excellent Glory*? What are all the occasions, upon which they say it was heard, but weak and trifling, and evidently unworthy of so sacred an Oracle? When *Jonathan* began his Paraphrase, [k] they tell us he was check'd by a *Bath Kol*, saying, *Quis est ille qui revelat filiis hominum mysteria Legis?* When *Rab. Juda Sanctus* died, the [l] *Talmudists* tell us, *Bath Kol beatitudinem eum plangentibus pronunciavit*, and the like. Besides, a Voice from Heaven seems reserved as the more sacred way of divine Revelation (so far is it from being the lowest degree of Prophecy) for the Times of the Gospel. It was a [m] Voice from Heaven that gave testimony to Christ, that occasioned S. *Paul*'s Conversion; and it is urged as a strong argument against refusing the Gospel, because it is a [n] *turning away from him that speaketh from Heaven*: And we shall observe that all the Prophecies of the Old Testament have not that Expression, *I heard a Voice from Heaven*, so oft as that single Prophecy of the New, the *Revelation*: God generally making use of o-

[k] V. Christoph. Helvic. de Paraph. Chald. p. 12.

[l] Dr. Lightfoot Hor. Hebr. p. 149.

[m] Mat. 3. 17. Joh. 12. 28.

[n] Heb. 12. 25.

ther ways before, to give his Prophets an intimation of his Counsels: So that this Notion cannot greatly prejudice the Reason alledged, having so little color of truth to recommend it. Nor am I alone in this perswasion, finding some learned men speaking [o] very doubtfully of it, and others very [p] confidently against it. Though perhaps all this be more then I need have said, for this was no personal Prophecy, nor (that I can find) ever asserted to declare things to come, but to direct in some emergent difficulties in common life.

o *Vocale Responsum quod* בת קול *dicitur, sub secundo Templo fuisse, nullo idoneo testimonio potest comprobari, quamvis Judæi contra pertendant.* Molin. Vat. l. 1. c. 26.

p *Credamne ego Deum Populo tam diræ apostasiæ laboranti, ita indulgentem, ut è cœlo cum iis familiariter colloqui dignaretur, atque iis Oracula tam sublimia exhibere, tamque frequentia ut non paria Prophetis &c.* R. Dr. Lightfoot, Hor. Hebr. p. 63.

In confirmation of what hath been said, 'twere easy to superadd the many Testimonies of the Ancients to prove the going up of the Prophetick Spirit in this confirm'd State of the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, who are so full in this perswasion, that (as 'tis noted) the *Montanists* are by some of the Fathers proved to be no better then Dissemblers when they pretended to the Gift of Prophecy, for that it was then ceased in the Church. But that I seem *not to boast in* [q] *another Man's line*, I shall dismiss this Chapter with a Conjecture upon a passage

q See their several Testimonies in Mr. *Smith's* Disc. of Prophec. p. 270.

in

in [r] *Strabo* applicable to our preſent purpoſe. He, coming to ſpeak of *Moſes* and ſome Jewiſh Cuſtoms, makes (after the manner of the Heathen) a very invidious relation of what Arts he uſed to oblige ſo great a multitude his Followers. One of which, he ſaith was a promiſe to deliver to them, *Such a worſhip, and ſuch rites of Sacrifice, as ſhould not trouble the Uſers of them with any great expenſes, nor prophetical raptures and ecſtacies, nor any other abſurd buſineſſes in Religion.* A Speech that aſſures *Strabo* not over-fond of ſuch things himſelf, for elſe he could not ſo eaſily have believed a promiſe of deliverance from them, the beſt bait *Moſes* could uſe to catch the hearts of the Multitude withall. But certain it is that no promiſe was further from his thoughts then this; for his law was a [s] law of rites and coſtly ſacrifices, and his great with was that *all the Lords people were Prophets*, and nothing that himſelf more pretended or [t] promiſed then Prophecy. I conceive therefore that (as moſt lies bottom upon ſome truth) this Relation was originally but ſome traditional prophecy of the State of the times under the *Meſſiah* current (among ſome others) among the Jews, or elſe a right opinion of theirs founded in a miſtaken Senſe of that Prophecy of [u] *Daniel* concerning the *Meſſiah*, that He ſhould *ſeal up Viſion and*

[r] Τοῦτην σεβασμὸν καὶ τοιαύτην ἱερουργίαν, ἥτις οὐδὲ δαπάνας ἐχλήσει πολὺ χαμιδύσας, οὔτε ἐνθουσιασμοὺς, οὔτε ἄλλοις τισὶ γελοίας ἀτόποις, Geogr. l. 16.

[s] Heb. 9. 10. Eph. 2. 15.

[t] Deut. 18. 15. 18.

[u] Dan. 9. 24. 27.

Pro-

Prophecy and cause sacrifice and oblation to cease. Now this notion of the ceasing of Prophecy and Sacrifice might (as some other did) arrive at last among the Gentiles, who understanding it to halfes, might easily intitle *Moses* to the promise thereof, a Person of so great Name both among the *Jews* and themselves.

But a freedom from these two is, if not the promise, the performance only of the *Mediator* of a better Covenant then *Moses*, who by the offering of himself to God left place for no other then ζῶσα θυσία, the [w] living sacrifice of our selves to God; and by the more liberal effusions of his Spirit to enlighten our minds, and to place our hearts above the fears and hopes of this world hath made Prophecy less necessary now, and therefore most likely not be at all therein. Sure I am God hath no where promised it to the *ends of the World*, nor do men most disposed, by great wisdom and Sanctity, to receive it, either feel it or desire it, and all that ever have, with the greatest wariness, trusted to it, have been at last clothed with shame and confusion, and God in his Providence seems to deliver all pretences to it to persons so extremely ignorant, vicious, vain or hypochondrical, that 'tis become a scandal to profess it, & for a man to pretend an Enthusiasm now, gives notice that he wants a Physician;

[w] Rom. 12.1.

fician; whereas heretofore his greateſt judgments Miracles and ſigns came to ſecure the honor of Prophecy, and of thoſe excellent Perſons which profeſt it.

Now there is ſcarce any Man but hath a quick ſenſe of the happineſs of being freed from a Religion made grievous by ſo many chargeable ſacrifices as the Jewiſh was: and whoſo conſiders that it was ſo hard to diſtinguiſh true Prophecy from falſe even in that Age to which it was promiſed, that *often* the People, and [x] *ſometimes* the true Prophets were abuſed by the Pretenders to it, and that it could not but have ſome uncleanneſſes therein, while attended with thoſe [y] vehement tranſports, conſternations, tremors, æniginatical Viſions, and that harſhneſs which the moſt gentle ſtrokes *the hand of God* made upon the faculties of thoſe holy men which were acted by it, cannot but value it as a happineſs that God hath delivered us now to the conduct only of that *ſure word of Prophecy*, the Scripture, and the evident and gentle *Maxims* of Right Reaſon.

[x] 1 King. 13. 18, 19.
[y] Iſa. 21. 3. Gen. 15. 12. Dan. 10. 8. Jer. 23. 9.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

The Conclusion.

Private persons not Competent Judges of Prophecy, and why. The Decree of Pope Leo touching New Prophets commended. Men formerly and still subject to be imposed upon by seeming Miracles. The discrediting of these Prophecies of great advantage to the Church.

LEst these Considerations should not be thought sufficient to disparage that easy faith which private men usually meet these Vulgar prophecies withall; I shall further mind the Reader, that Prophecy is in it self and so hath been judged by wise men a matter too nice and subtile for any, much less for men that ‖ *occupy* τὸν τόπον τῦ ἰδιώτου, *the room of the unlearned* in the Church, to make an hasty judgment in. Therefore (as was noted before from *Plato*) the Laws in the *Grecian* Commonwealth, appointed δοκιμαστὰς ἐνθέων μαντείας χρησὰς *some* publick *Judges over Enthusiastick prophecies:* which institution, whatever further end the State aimed at therein, proceeded upon this acknowledg'd principle, That Prophecy was in the source and sense thereof too perplext and dark a business for the ruder minds of private men to make any steady judgment in.

‖ 1 Cor. 14. 16

And therefore as passionately as the *Romish* Church laies claim to the *Spirit of Prophecy*,

phecy, as the testimony of God to her, yet upon occasion of some Enthusiasts which would define the particular time of the Day of judgment, we find a very severe and punctual Decree made by Pope *Leo* to limit the judgment of such Persons, the summ whereof is this. [a] *If God have revealed some things to come to any of them, we will by no means that they be presently reputed Impostors, or any way disturbed*, (against the Apostolical command of not *despising Prophesyings*) *but* [b] *we will that by an Ordinary law all such asserted inspirations before they be published or preached to the people, be from henceforth understood reserved solely to the cognizance of the Apostolical Chair. But if that may not be without some danger of delay, and an urgent necessity advise otherwise, then that they be notified to the Ordinary of the place, that he taking with him three or four grave and learned men, and having diligently examined the whole business with them, when they shall judge it convenient (upon which we charge their own Consciences) they may give licence for the publication of them.* And after many other *Proviso's* in this affair, the whole is concluded with a severe temporal and spiritual punishment threatned upon the offenders in the premises. Should appear *ictus Piscator*, the Pope once stricken by such apish prophets became wise, and would no longer entrust the

a *Caterum, si quibusdam eorum Dominus futura quædã in Dei Ecclesia inspiratione quapiam revelaverit, &c.* Concil. Later. Sub. Leon. 10. Sess. 11.

b *Volumus ut lege ordinaria tales assertæ inspirationes, antequam publicentur aut populo prædicentur, ex nunc Apostolicæ sedis examini reservata intelligantur, &c.*

the judgment of them with the soft and ignorant Multitude.

Now Prophecy hath been thus wisely reserved to the cognizance of Persons of more exercised minds, because [c] humane Nature undisciplin'd is so extremely prone to meet things pompous and vehement with very sacred and solemn thoughts, and to think (as the frogs in the fable, by the block which fell among them) if the person make a great noise and bustle, come attended with flaming expressions, pathetical devotions, singularities of gesture and phrase, affected silences and severities, that he is Διοπεμπὴς sent from God extraordinarily, to rule in their minds and lives. Besides, men that have no notices of the compass of natural or diabolical operation, are ready to receive the sudden tremors, frequent ecstacies and other works which fall not within the little circle of their observation, as the powers of God and examples Miraculous. And this they may be the more easily tempted to do, because though sometimes the signs these Prophets shew are so thin and weak that the dullest eye may see through them, and discover them to be the delusions of the Devil or Melancholy (such was that of [d] *Drabicius* and many of *Apollavius*,) yet sometimes jugling Prophets have acted a Miracle so to the life, that even wise men have been imposed upon by the fine and subtil

[c] *Solent Americani ipsos montes & quicquid communem naturæ ordinem egreditur, venerari.* D. Vol. de Idolol. p. 7.

[d] *Zeli excessu signum aliquod (ut Gedeoni vel Mariæ) dari instanter petiit* Drabic. *datumque est* Frontis punctura & velut igne ambusta facies (*risum teneatis?*) Histor. Drab. per. J. A. C. p. 14.

subtil management of the imposture, as may apear by that Chapter in *Iamblichus* intitled *Miracula multa fiunt à Prophetis*, and other writers.

e *Multi eorum admoto igne non uruntur, ignem videlicet repellente Deo intus assiante, verè uruntur non persentiunt, neque pungentia percipiunt vel radentia vel ulla tormenta, ... per invia vadunt, per ignem feruntur intacti, &c.* Dr. Myst. Eg. & M. Mede Apost. last times. P. 2. c. 2. & 3. Mat. 24. 24.

If all these considerations might obtain with men to give no faith or (which is next to it) a very slow and doubtful one to all pretended Prophets now, the happy consequent would be the freedom of the world at last from these ancient cheats, for these little Oracles (like those of old) would soon become less talkative if men were once become less credulous; and God would no more be look'd for in the *whirl-wind* of raptures, mystical phrases, and ecstatical Orations, but in the *still voice* of a great humility, a sound mind, and an heart reconciled to himself and all the world; and they would begin to believe God knows better what is good for us then we do ourselves, while hiding futurities from us, that so we might not be discomposed by any joys, sorrows or fears born out of due time; and they would cast anchor onely upon his Promises and Attributes, when *afflicted with all his waves*, and value them as sufficient security to the peace and quiet of their minds in the worst of Evils. Finally all the Ends the Devil seek

seeks to serve upon such Prophecies would be happily defeated; who if they chance to hit, fails not to possess the *Deliverer* of them with an impregnable perswasion that he is God's *Holy One*, his *(Urim)* sacred Oracles being found with him; and the *Receiver* with such great Opinions of them as shall render him curious, credulous, anxious, impertinent in his studies, and regardless of the known rules of life. But if they miss, he tempts men to a suspicion of all Prophecy for the sake of the false, and to regard even the Revelations of Scripture but as more venerable impostures.

FINIS.

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FINIS.